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SACRED BIOGRAPHY :
OR, THE
HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE

Sam: Miller's

History of *Deborah*, *Ruth*, and *Hannah*.

BEING A

COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT THE

SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.



The First American Edition.

COMPLETE IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. — JOHN viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. — REVELATION i. 8.

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Exod. xviii. 7—12.—*And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him: and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians, for Israel's sake, and all the travel that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel; whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses's father-in-law, before God.*

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scended upon it in fire ; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount : and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

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Josh. i. 17.—According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee : only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

John. i. 17.—For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

SACRED



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LECTURE I.

LUKE XX. 27—38.

Then came to him certain of the Sadducees (which deny that there is any resurrection) and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. And they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

ONE of the most obvious and natural consolations of reason, under the loss of those whom we dearly loved, and one of the most abundant consolations furnished by religion, is the belief that our departed friends are, at their death, disposed of infinitely to their advantage. We weep and mourn while we reflect upon the deprivation of comfort which we have sustained; but we wipe the tears of sorrow from our eyes, when we consider that our loss is their unspeakable gain. “Rachel weeping for her children,” refuses to be comforted so long as she thinks “they are not;” but her soul is tranquillized and comforted when her eyes, in faith, look within the veil, and behold them softly and securely reposing in the bosom of their Father and God. It is an humbling and a mortifying employment to visit church-yards, to step from grave to grave, to recal the memory while we trample upon the ashes of the young,

the beautiful, the wise and the good ; but we find immediate relief, we rise into joy, we tread among the stars, when, aided by religion, we transport ourselves in thought to those blessed regions where all the faithful live, and reign, and rejoice ; where “ they that be wise shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”* Distance is then swallowed up and lost, and we mingle in the noble employments and pure delights of the blessed immortals who encircle the throne of God.

It is astonishing to think, that there should have been men disposed willingly to deprive themselves of this glorious source of comfort ; men ready to resign the high prerogative of their birthright, and by a species of humility strange and unnatural, spontaneously degrading themselves to the level of the brutes that perish. And yet there have been in truth such men in every age. But it is no wonder to find those who satisfy themselves with the pursuits and enjoyments of a mere beastly nature while they live, contented to lie down with the beasts in death, to arise no more. They first make it their interest that there should be no hereafter, and then they fondly persuade themselves that there shall be none.

Error of every kind, both in faith and morals, prevailed in the extreme, at the period when and in the country where the Saviour of the world appeared for our redemption. The nation of the Jews was divided, in respect of moral and religious sentiment, into two great sects or parties, who both pretended to found their opinions upon the authority of the inspired books, which were held in universal estimation among them ; and particularly the writings of Moses. But they drew conclusions directly opposite from the same facts and doctrines ; and both deviated, in the grossest manner, from the spirit and design of that precious record which they both affected to hold in the highest veneration.

The Pharisees, earnestly contending for the strict observance of the law, confined their attention to its minuter and less important objects, and paid “ the tithe of mint and anise and cummin,” but omitted “ the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith :” and, raising oral tradition to the rank and dignity of scripture, found a pretence for dispensing with the plainest and most essential

* Dan. xii. 3.

obligations

obligations of morality, when these contradicted their interests and opinions. Heinously offended at the neglect of washing of hands previous to eating, they were wicked enough to establish, by a law of their own, neglect of, unkindness and disobedience to parents ; thus, according to the just censure which our Lord passed upon them, “ straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel.”

The Sadducees, on the other hand, the strong spirits of the age, disdaining the restraints imposed on mankind by a written law, thought fit to become a law unto themselves. They left the austeries of a strict religion and morality to vulgar minds ; and, that they might procure peace to themselves in the enjoyment of those sinful pleasures to which they were addicted, they denied the existence of spirit, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution. They alleged that the law was silent on those points, and that this silence was a sufficient reason for rejecting the belief of them. They went farther, and contended, that were such doctrines contained in the law, they ought not to be admitted, because they implied a contradiction, or at least involved such a number of difficulties as it was impossible satisfactorily to solve. The chief of those difficulties they propose to our blessed Saviour in the passage which I have read ; and they do this, not in the spirit of docility and diffidence, to have it removed, but in the pride of their hearts, vainly taking for granted that it was insurmountable.

My principal intention in leading your thoughts to this subject at this time, is the occasion which it afforded to the great Teacher who came from God, of discoursing on a theme nearly connected with the design of these Lectures ; and of disclosing to us sundry important particulars, respecting the venerable men whose lives we have been studying, and those which we are still to examine ; and respecting that world in which we, together with them, have a concern so deeply, because eternally, interesting. To these we shall be led by making a few cursory remarks on the preceding conversation which took place between Christ and the Sadducees. And this shall serve as an Introduction to the farther continuation of a Course of Lectures on the history of the memorable persons and events presented to us in the holy scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments.

The Sadducees insidiously begin their attack by professing the highest respect for the authority of Moses and of his

his writings: "Master, Moses wrote unto us." The most pernicious designs, the most malevolent purposes, are frequently found to clothe themselves in smiles; often while mischief lies brooding in men's hearts, "their words are smoother than oil." The father of lies himself can have recourse to truth if it be likely to serve his turn; and the enemy of all goodness will condescend to quote that scripture which he hates, if it can help him to an argument for the occasion. With this affected deference for Moses, the Sadducees are aiming at the total subversion of every moral and religious principle, by weakening one of the strongest motives to virtue, and undermining the surest foundation of hope and joy to man. They allege, that obedience to the law might eventually lead to much confusion and disorder; and they suppose a situation, for none such ever existed, in which compliance with the revealed will of God in this world would infallibly lead to discord and distress in that which is to come. In this we have an example of a very common case; that of men straining their eyes to contemplate objects at a great distance, or totally out of sight, and wilfully neglecting or overlooking those which are immediately before them: troubling themselves about effects and consequences of which they are ignorant, and over which they have no power, while they are regardless of obvious truth and commanded duty, though these are their immediate business and concern. The Sadducees in order to cloak their licentiousness and infidelity, affect solicitude about the regularity and peace of a future state, which in words they denied, if they did not from the heart disbelieve.

I make but one remark more before I proceed to our Lord's reply. Eagerness and anxiety to bring forward and to establish an opinion, betray an inward doubt or disbelief of it. Truth is not ever proclaiming itself from the house-tops, is not forward to obtrude itself upon every occasion, but is satisfied with maintaining and defending itself when assaulted; but falsehood is eternally striving to conceal or strengthen its conscious weakness by a parade of words, and a shew of reason. The zeal of the Sadducees to explode and run down the doctrine of the resurrection, plainly betrays a secret dread and belief of it.

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Our Lord, in his answer, points out directly the source of all error and infidelity, “ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, and the power of God.” Not knowing the scriptures, ye suppose a doctrine is not in them, because ye have not found it there: because ye have wilfully shut your own eyes, ye vainly imagine there is no light in the sun; and take upon you to affirm there is none. Not knowing the power of God, you call that impossible which you cannot do, deem that absurd which you do not comprehend, and pronounce that false which you wish to be so. The whole force of the objection to the truth of the resurrection, goes upon the supposition, that the future world is to be exactly constituted as the present; that the relations and distinctions which subsist among men upon earth, are to subsist in the kingdom of heaven. But the supposition is founded in ignorance and falsehood; and, the moment it is denied, the mighty argument built upon it falls to the ground. “In the resurrection,” says Christ, “they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”

In these words, the condition of men in the world to come, is described, first, negatively, “they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” The power which created the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, might undoubtedly, had it pleased him, have created the whole human race at once, as easily as he formed the first of men, Adam, and as easily as he rears up one generation of men after another, in the course of his providence. But, thinking it meet to people the earth by multiplying mankind gradually upon it, difference of sex and the institution of marriage were the means which he was pleased to employ. In the resurrection, the number of the redeemed being complete at once, that difference, and that institution, being unnecessary, shall be done away. Our Saviour adds “neither can they die any more.” Death, too, enters into the plan of Providence for the government of this world. Men must be removed,

ed, to make room for men. But because this sphere is narrow and contracted, and unable to contain and support the increasing multitudes of many generations, is the Lord's hand shortened, that he cannot expand a more spacious firmament, and compact a more spacious globe, to contain, at once, the countless nations of them that are saved? O how greatly do men err; not knowing the power of God! Death is no part of the plan of Providence for the government of that world of bliss. In our Father's house above there are *many* mansions; there is bread enough, and to spare; there is room for all, provision for all: the father need not to die, to give space to the son, nor the mother to spare, that the child may have enough. For they are "as the angels of God," says our Lord, according to Matthew, "equal to the angels," says our evangelist, "and are the children of God."

This describes their happiness positively. Men on earth "see in a glass darkly; know in part, prophecy in part," are encompassed with infirmity; but the "angels in heaven" excel in strength, stand before the throne of God, serve him day and night in his temple, without wearying, see face to face, know as they are known." Their number is completed, their intercourse is pure and perfect, without the means of increase and union which exist here below.

Having thus reproved their ignorance and presumption, respecting the "power of God," our Lord proceeds to expose their ignorance respecting "the scriptures," and produces a passage from Moses, in whom they trusted, which they had hitherto overlooked or misunderstood, wherein the doctrine in dispute was clearly laid down; and which we had principally in view in leading your attention to this passage on the present occasion.

The passage quoted, is that noted declaration of God to Moses, from the midst of the burning bush, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the

the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”* That God should have condescended to hold this language concerning Enoch, “ who was translated that he should not see death,” had been less wonderful ; for that holy man, who walked with God upon earth, was exalted immediately to a more intimate union with God in heaven. But to speak thus of men who were long ago mouldered into dust, of whom nothing remained among men but their names, conveys an idea of human existence, before which the life of a Methuselah dwindles into nothing, an idea which swallows up mortality, and gives a dignity and a duration to man that bids defiance to the grave. That God should say to Abraham, while he lived, “ I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,”† was a miracle of grace and condescension ; but to speak thus, more than three centuries after he had been consigned to the tomb, “ I am the God of Abraham,” this exhibits a relation between God and the faithful, which perfectly reconciles the mind to the thoughts of dissolution. Indeed it is impossible to conceive any thing more elevating, any thing more tranquillizing to the soul, than the view of future bliss with which the text presents us. And this tranquillity and elevation are greatly heightened by the consideration, that Jehovah from the midst of flaming fire, under the Old Testament dispensation, and Jehovah, in the person of the great Redeemer, under the New, taught the same glorious truth to the world. And what is it? “ I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

When God was pleased to express his favourable regard to Abraham upon earth, what did it amount to? He led him through a particular district of land, in the length and the breadth of it, and said “ I will give it thee.” But Abraham now expatiates through a more ample region, and contemplates a fairer inheritance, an inheritance his own, not in hope, but in possession. Abraham, though following the lead-

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* Exod. iii. 6.

† Gen. xv. i.

ing of the Divine Providence, saw the Redeemer's day only afar off: but, in virtue of his relation to God, he has now beheld the dawning of the morning expanded into the pure light of the perfect day. He once felt the events which affected his family, with the emotion natural to a man; he has since beheld them extending their influence to nations which he thought not of; and he now looks forward in holy rapture, to that period when he, and his Isaac, and an earthly Canaan, and every thing of a temporal and transitory nature, shall bring their glory and their honour, and lay all at the feet of "Him, who sitteth upon the throne, and before the Lamb."

From Abraham we are removed to a distance of time and place, in which thought is lost, and we seem to have no more interest in him than if he had never existed. But the doctrine of the text brings us so close to him, that we recognise the friend of God, in the midst of myriads of saints in glory; we converse with him, and continue to be instructed by him.

The dust of Abraham sleeps unnoticed and forgotten in the cave of Machpelah; but lift up thine eyes, and behold Abraham on high, and Lazarus in his bosom; his spirit united to God "the Father of spirits," and to all "the spirits of just men made perfect." "And even that dust" also "rests in hope:" It shall not always be left in the place of the dead; it shall not remain forever a prey to corruption. Abraham purchased a tomb, and buried his Sarah out of his sight; but he has overtaken, regained her, in the regions of eternal day, where virtuous and believing friends meet, never more to be disjoined. Abraham received his Isaac from the wonder-working hand of Heaven, when nature was dead to hope; at the command of God he cheerfully surrendered him again, and devoted him upon the altar: again he receives him to newness of life, and that darling son lives to put his hand upon his eyes. But they were not long disunited; the son has overtaken the parents; they rejoice

rejoice in God, and in one another; they are the children and heirs of the resurrection; "they are as the angels of God in heaven."

"I am the God of Isaac." This Isaac, the heir of Abraham's possessions, of his faith, and of his virtues, was, on earth, united to the God of the spirits of all flesh, by many tender and important relations: by piety, by filial confidence, by goodness, by patience and submission, on his part; by election, by special favour, by highness of destination, on the part of his heavenly Father. Yet these distinguished advantages exempted him not from the stroke of affliction. Many years did this heir of the promises, this chosen seed, "in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed," many years did he go childless. Early in life was he visited with the loss of sight, and thereby exposed to much mortification and dejection of spirit. Children are at length given him, and they prove the torment of his life; they excite a war betwixt nature and grace in his own breast; discord and jealousy arm them against each other; he is in danger of "losing them both in one day." The one must be banished from his father's house, the other mingles with idolators. Behold a wretched, blind old man, a prey to "grief of heart." But these things, on the other hand, dissolved not, interrupted not his covenant relation to God: they served but to cement and strengthen the divine friendship: and death which, to human apprehension, separates every connexion, and indeed tears asunder every mortal tie, only brought him into a clearer light, and to intercourse and intimacy, which can never expire.

"I am the God of Jacob." In all the wanderings, in all the dangers, in all the distresses of this patriarch; in all his successes, all his acquisitions, all his joys, we discover the relation of God to him, expressed in these words; and we behold the presence of God with him whithersoever he went, constantly relieving the wretchedness of one state; dignifying and supporting

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the felicity of the other. This gave him security from the violence of an incensed brother ; this cheered the solitude of Luz, and turned it into a Bethel ; by this the slumbers of a head reposèd on a pillar of stone were made refreshing and instructive ; this repressed and overbalanced the rapacity of Laban ; this supported and sanctified the loss of Joseph ; this sweetened the descent into Egypt, and dissipated the gloom of death ; by this, though dead, he exists, though silent he speaketh, “absent from the body he is present with the Lord ;” the moment of his departure is on the wing to overtake that of his redemption from the power of the grave. Before God, the distance shrinks into nothing. That word, that one little word, I AM, unites the era of nature’s birth with that of its dissolution, it joins eternity to eternity, “and swallows up death in victory.”

The same gracious declaration applies, with equal truth and justice, to every son and daughter “of faithful Abraham,” to every “Israelite indeed.” We speak of departed friends in the *past* time, we “cannot but remember such things *were* ; and *were* most dear to us ;” but it is the glorious prerogative of Jehovah to employ eternally the *present* in describing his own essence, and his covenant relation to his people : “I AM THAT I AM.” “I AM the God of thy father,” of thy buried, thy lamented brother, friend, lover, child. And to us also is the word of this consolation sent, “Fear not, for I *am* with thee, be not dismayed, I *am* thy God.” “Thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel ; Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I *am* the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” Believing and resting upon this sure foundation, the

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christian triumphs in the prospect of “ departing and being with Christ ;” he smiles at the threatening looks of the king of terrors, exults and sings “ with the sweet finger of Israel,” “ yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me, thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever :”* and triumphs with the enraptured apostle of the Gentiles, “ O death, where is thy sting ; O grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”†

It is a transporting reflection, that the fond wishes and desires of the human heart are warranted, encouraged and supported by the revelation of God : that the life and immortality which we naturally pant after, are brought to light by the gospel. It is pleasant to find wise and good men, guided only by the light of reason, and the honest propensities of nature, cherishing that very belief, cleaving to that very hope, which the text inspires. Cicero, in his beautiful treatise on old age, while he relates the sentiments of others, sweetly delivers his own on this subject. The elder Cyrus according to Xenophon, thus addressed his sons before his death : “ Do not imagine, O my dear children, that when I leave you, I cease to exist. For even while I was yet with you, my spirit you could not discern ; but that it animated this body you were fully assured by the actions which I performed. Be assured it will continue the same, though still you see it not. The glory of illustrious men would sink with them into the grave, were not their surviving spirits capable of exertion, and concerned to rescue their names from oblivion. I can never suffer myself to be persuaded, that the man lives only while he is in the body, and dies when it is dissolved ; or that the soul loses all intelligence on being separated from an unintelligent lump

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* Psal. xxiii. 4, 6.

† 1 Cor. xv. 15, 57.

of clay ; but rather that, on being liberated from all mixture with body, pure and entire, it enters upon its true intellectual existence. At death, any one may discover what becomes of the material part of our frame : all sinks into that from which it arose, every thing is resolved into its first principle ; the soul alone is apparent neither while it is with us, nor when it departs. What so much resembles death as sleep ? Now the powers of the mind, in sleep, loudly proclaim their own divinity ; free and unfettered, the soul plunges into futurity, ascends its native sky. Hence we may conclude how enlarged those powers will be, when undepressed, unrestrained by the chains of flesh. Since these things are so, consider and reverence me as a tutelary deity. But, granting that the mind were to expire with the body, nevertheless, out of reverence to the immortal Gods, who support and direct this fair fabric of nature, piously, affectionately cherish the memory of your affectionate father." The great Roman orator puts these words into the mouth of Cato, in addressing his young friends Scipio and Lælius. " Those excellent men, your fathers, who were so dear to me in life, I consider as still alive ; and indeed, as now enjoying a state of being which alone deserves to be dignified with the name of life. For as long as we are shut up in this dungeon of sense, we have to toil through the painful and necessary drudgery of life, and to accomplish the laborious task of an hireling. The celestial spirit is, as it were, depressed, degraded from its native seat, and plunged into the mire of this world, a state repugnant to its divine nature and eternal duration." And again, " Nobody shall ever persuade me, Scipio, that your father Paullus, and your two grandfathers, Paullus and Africanus, and many other eminent men whom it is unnecessary to mention, would have attempted and achieved so many splendid actions, which were to extend their influence to posterity, had they not clearly discerned that they had an interest in, and a connexion with the ages of futurity,

futurity, and with generations yet unborn. Can you imagine, that I may talk a little of myself, after the manner of old men, can you imagine, that I would have submitted to so many painful toils, by night and by day, in the forum, in the senate, in the field, had I apprehended that my existence, and my reputation, were to terminate with my life? Were this the case, would it not have been much better to dose away in indolence an insignificant and useless life? But, I do not know how, the soul, incessantly exerting its native vigour, still sprung eagerly forward into ages yet to come, and seized them as its own.

“I feel myself transported with delight at the thought of again seeing and joining your fathers, whom on earth I highly respected and dearly loved; and, borne on the wings of hope and desire, I am speeding my flight to mingle in the honoured society, not of those only whom on earth I knew, and with whom I have conversed; but of those also of whom I have heard and read, and the history of whose lives I myself have written, for the instruction of mankind. I have the consolation of reflecting, that I have not lived wholly in vain: and I quit my station in life without regret, as the way-faring man, whose face is towards home, bids farewell to the inn where he had stopped for a little refreshment on his way. O glorious day, when I shall be admitted into the divine assembly of the wise and good! When I shall make an eternal escape from this sink of corruption, and the din of folly! When amidst the happy throng of the immortals, I shall find thee also my son, my Cato, best, most amiable of men! On thy ashes, I bestowed the honours of the tomb. Ah! why did not mine rather receive them from thy hand? But your spirit, I know it, has never forsaken me; but casting back many a longing, lingering look to your afflicted father, has removed to that region of purity and peace whither you were confident I should shortly follow you. And I feel, I feel our separation cannot be of long continuance.

“If,

“If, indulging myself in this fond hope, my young friends, I am under the power of delusion, it is a sweet, it is an innocent delusion. I will hold it fast and never let it go, while I live. I despise the sneer of the witling, who would attempt to laugh me out of my immortality. Suppose him in the right, and myself under a mistake, he shall not have the power to insult me, nor shall I have the mortification of feeling his scorn, when we are both gone to the land of everlasting forgetfulness.”

How pleasing the thought, my dear christian friends, I again repeat it, how pleasing the thought, that the honest propensities of nature, the fairest conclusions of unassisted reason, and the most ardent breathings of truth and virtue, are here in unison with the clearest and most explicit declarations of the holy scriptures!

But the sacred Dove soars into a region which nature and reason never could have explored. Revelation, to the immortality of the soul, has added the resurrection of the body. And, “wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?” The Spirit says to “these dry bones, Live.” “We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” What a sure ground of hope, that “them also who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him!” Delightful reflection! Who would be so unjust to God, and so unkind to himself, as to part with it? How it smooths the rugged path of life, how it tempers the bitterness of affliction, how it dissipates the horrors of the grave! One child sleeps in the dust, the diameter of the globe separates me from another, but the word of life, “I AM the God of thy seed,” rescues that one from corruption, and puts the other in my embrace. Time dwindleth into a point, the earth melts away, “the trumpet sounds,” “the dead arise incorruptible.” Behold all things are made new! “New heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” “Arise, let us go hence,” and “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.”

History of Moses.

LECTURE II.

HEBREWS xi. 24—27.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

THE history of mankind contains many a lamentable detail of the sad reverses to which human affairs are liable ; of the affluent, by unforeseen, unavoidable calamity, tumbled into indigence ; of greatness in eclipse ; of the mighty fallen ; of princes dethroned, banished, put to death. In some instances of this sort, we see the unhappy sufferers making a virtue of necessity, and bearing their misfortunes with a certain degree of patience and magnanimity ; but in general, sudden and great distress either sours or depresses the spirit, and men submit to the will of Providence with so ill a grace, that it is evident they are not under the power of religion, and that they flee not for consolation to the prospects of immortality.

We are this evening to contemplate one of those rare examples of true greatness of mind, which made a voluntary sacrifice of the most enviable situation, and the most flattering prospects, which human life admits

admits of ; and that at an age when the heart is most devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, most susceptible of the allurements of ambition. It is the singular instance of Moses, the prophet and legislator of Israel, who, brought up from infancy in a court, instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, treated as the heir of empire, and encouraged to aspire to all that the heart naturally covets, and that Providence bestows, on the most favoured of mankind ; at the age of forty cheerfully resigned all these advantages, and preferred the life of a slave with his brethren, and of a shepherd in the land of Midian, among strangers, to all the luxury and splendour belonging to the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to all the dazzling hopes of royalty or of power next to majesty.

Scripture, in its own admirably concise method, dispatches the history of this great man's life, from his infancy to his fortieth year, in a few short words, namely, " and Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds : " * as not deeming information concerning attainments in human science, or feats of martial prowess, worthy of the knowledge of posterity, compared to the triumphs of his faith, the generous workings of his public spirit, and the noble ardour of fervent piety.

Philo and Josephus, however, and other Jewish writers, have taken upon them to fill up this interval of time, by a fanciful, fabulous, unsupported account of the earlier years of Moses ; which we should perhaps be disposed, in part, to retail for your amusement, if not for your instruction, had not the Spirit of God supplied us with well authenticated memoirs of a more advanced period of his life. In the perusal of which, with serious meditation upon them, we shall, I trust, find pleasure and profit blended together.

Taking inspiration then for our guide, we divide the history of Moses into three periods of equal duration

* Acts vii. 22.

tion in respect of time, namely of forty years each ; but very different in respect of situation, notoriety and importance. The first, and of which the bible is silent, or speaks but a single word, presents him to us a student in the schools of the Egyptian Magi, one among the princes in the court of Pharaoh, a poet, an orator, a statesman, a general, or whatever else imagination pleases to make him. The second, exhibits an humble shepherd, tending the flocks of Jethro his father-in-law, and fulfilling the duties and exemplifying the virtues of the private citizen. In the third, we attend the footsteps of the favour of his nation, the leader and commander, the lawgiver and judge of the Israel of God : under whom that chosen race was conducted from Egyptian oppression, to the possession of the land promised to Abraham and to his seed ; the instrument chosen, raised up and employed of the Divine Providence, to execute the purposes of the Almighty, in a case which affected the general interests, spiritual and everlasting, of all mankind.

It is of the second of these periods we are now to treat ; and though our materials be small and few, if we be so happy as to make a proper use of them, we shall find that, by the blessing of God, our labour has not been in vain.

In Moses, then, in the very prime and vigour of his life, we see a mind uncorrupted by the maxims and manners of an impious, tyrannical, idolatrous court ; a mind not intoxicated by royal favour, not seduced by the allurements of ambition, not deadened by the uninterrupted possession of prosperity, to the impressions of humanity and compassion. And what preserved him ? He believed in God. The mind's eye was fixed on Him who is invisible to the eye of sense. And what is the wisdom of Egypt compared to this ? It was a land of astronomers, a land of warriors, a land of artists ; and the improvement which Moses made in every liberal art and science, we may well suppose was equal to any, the first, of the age and nation.

nation in which he lived. But a principle infinitely superior to every thing human, a principle not taught in the schools of the philosophers, a principle which carries the soul where it resides, beyond the limits of this little world, inspired high thoughts, dictated a noble, manly, generous conduct.

And first, it taught him to despise and to reject empty, unavailing, worldly honours. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."* Ordinary spirits value themselves on rank and distinction. Ordinary men, raised unexpectedly to eminence, strive to conceal and to forget the meanness of their extraction ; but Moses would rather pass for the son of a poor, oppressed Israelite, than for the adopted son and heir of the oppressing tyrant's daughter. Putting religion out of the question, true magnanimity will seek to derive consequence from itself, not from parentage or any other adventitious circumstance ; will not consider itself as ennobled by what it could have no power over, nor debased by what has in its own nature no shame. To be either vain of one's ancestry, or ashamed of it, is equally the mark of a grovelling spirit. Art thou highly descended, my friend ? Let high birth inspire high, that is, worthy, generous sentiments. Beware of disgracing reputable descent, by sordid, vulgar, vicious behaviour. Hast thou nothing to boast of in respect of pedigree ? Strive to lay the foundation of thine own nobility : convince the fools of the world, that goodness is true greatness ; that a catalogue of living virtues is much more honourable than a long list of departed names. Know ye not, that faith makes every one who lives by it more than the son of a king ? For the son of a king may be a fool or a profligate ; but faith makes its possessor a son of God, that is, a wise and a good man ; and by it, Moses was more noble in the wilderness of Sinai, than in the imperial court of Pharaoh.

As

* Heb. xi. 24.

As this divine instructor taught him to undervalue and to refuse empty honours, so it inspired him with pity to his afflicted brethren. “ And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens : and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.”* Ease and affluence generally harden the heart. If it be well with the selfish man himself, he little cares what others endure. But religion teaches another lesson : “ Love to God whom we have not seen,” will always be productive of “ love to men whom we have seen.” From the root of faith many kindred stems spring up ; and all bring forth fruit. There, arises the stately plant of heavenly mindedness, producing the golden apples of self-government, self-denial, and contempt of the world ; and close by its side, and sheltered by its branches, gentle sympathy expands its blossoms and breathes its perfumes ; consolation to the afflicted, and relief to the miserable.

The progress of compassion, in Moses, is described with wonderful delicacy and judgment. First, he foregoes the pleasures of a court. Unable to relish a solitary, selfish gratification, while he reflected that his nearest and dearest relations were eating the bread and drinking the water of affliction, he goes out to look upon their misery, and tries by kind looks and words of love, to soothe their woes. Unable to alleviate, much less to remove their anguish, he is determined at least to be a partaker of it ; and since he cannot raise them to the enjoyment of *his* liberty and ease, he voluntarily takes a share of *their* bondage and oppression. There is something wonderfully pleasing to a soul in trouble, to see one who might have shunned it, and have turned away from the sufferer, out of pure love drinking from the same bitter cup, and submitting to the same calamity. At length an honest zeal breaks forth, and overleaps the bounds of patience and discretion. Seeing a brutal Egyptian

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* Exod. ii. 11.

fmiting an Hebrew, incapable of suppressing his indignation, he assaults the oppressor, and puts him to death. "Moses was meek above all the men of the earth." But "surely oppression maketh a wise man mad." This we allege as an apology for the conduct of Moses, not a vindication of it; for we pretend not to say it was in all respects justifiable. But it is one of those singular cases to which common rules will not apply.

The day after, he had the mortification of seeing two Hebrews striving together. Unhappy men! as if they had not enemies enough in their common, cruel task-masters; as if condemnation to labour in making bricks without some of the necessary materials, could not find employment for their most vigorous efforts; as if an edict to destroy all their male children from their birth, had not been sufficient to fill up the measure of their woe; they pour hatred and strife into the bowl, already surcharged with wormwood and gall. Wretched sons of men! eternally arraigning the wisdom and goodness of Providence; eternally complaining of the hardships of their lot; and eternally swelling the catalogue of their miseries, by their own perverseness and folly; adding vinegar to nitre, and then wondering how their distresses came to be so great! Moses reproved the offending Egyptian by a blow, and a mortal one; he tries to gain an offending brother by meekness and gentleness; he makes reason and humanity speak; but they speak in vain; for the same spirit that leads men to commit cruelty or injustice, leads them also to vindicate and support their ill conduct. "And he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us: intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?"* From this, Moses discovered that the rash action which he had committed the day before, was publickly known and

talked

* Exod. ii. 13, 14.

talked of, and might prove fatal to him; unless he instantly fled from the danger. The affair had reached the ears of Pharaoh, who, it would appear, wanted only a decent pretence to rid himself of a man of whom all Egypt was jealous. He hurries away therefore out of the territories of the king of Egypt, into that part of Arabia which is called Petrea, from its mountainous or rocky aspect; and by a singular concurrence of providential circumstances, is stopped at a city of that country called Midian, and is induced to remain there for many years.

There lived in this city a person of distinguished rank and station; but whether possessed of a sacred or a civil character, the ambiguity of the term in the holy language permits us not to determine; and the scripture leaves us totally uncertain whether he were a priest or a prince of Midian. But we are left in no doubt respecting his moral and intellectual qualifications; and we shall have no reason to be displeased at finding the history of Moses blended with that of so sensible and so good a man as Jethro, or Raguel, turns out to be. Whatever his dignity was, the sacerdotal or royal, we find his daughters trained up in all the simplicity of those early times; following the humble, harmless profession of shepherdesses. Wise is that father, kind and just to his children, who, whatever his station, possessions or prospects may be, brings up his sons and his daughters to some virtuous and useful employment; for idleness is not more odious, dishonourable and contemptible, than it is inimical to happiness, and irreconcileable to inward peace.

Moses, being arrived in the neighbourhood of Midian, weary and faint with a long journey, through a barren and inhospitable country, sits down by a well of water to rest and refresh himself. And, as a good man's footsteps are all ordered of the Lord, Providence sends him thither just at the moment, to succour the daughters of Raguel from the violence of

some of their neighbours. In those countries, the precious fluid bestowed upon us in such boundless profusion, being dispensed as it were in drops, became an object of desire and a ground of contention. The daughters of Jethro, sensible of their inferiority in point of strength, endeavour to supply it by diligence and address. They arrive at the well before their rival shepherds, and are preparing with all possible dispatch to water their flocks, when behold they are overtaken by these brutes, who rudely drive them and their flocks away, and cruelly attempt to convert the fruits of their labour to their own use. Moses possessing at once sensibility, courage and force, takes part with the injured, and affords them effectual support against their oppressors. An helpless, timid female, assaulted and insulted, is an object of peculiar concern to a brave and generous spirit; and for this reason, courage and intrepidity are qualities in men, held in great and just estimation by the female sex.

If the heroic behaviour of Moses merit approbation and respect, the modest reserve of the virgin daughters of Raguel is equally amiable and praise-worthy. It does not appear that they solicited protection, but modestly received it; they look their thanks rather than utter them; and they deem it more suitable to their sex and character to appear ungrateful to a generous stranger, than to offend him by forwardness and indelicacy. They hasten home to their father, who, surprised at the earliness of their return, inquires into the cause of it. Happy, I doubt not, to celebrate the praises of a man whose appearance and behaviour must have made a deep impression upon them, they relate the adventure of the morning; and Raguel, struck with the magnanimity, gallantry and spirit of this stranger's conduct, eagerly inquires after him, sends to find him out, invites him to his house and table, and endeavours to express that gratitude, which the young women could not, by every effort of kindness and hospitality.

Minds so well assort'd as those of Moses and Jethro, and attracted to each other by mutual acts of beneficence, would easily assimilate and unite in friendship. And the pleasing recollection of protection given and received, the natural sensibility of a female mind to personal accomplishments, but more especially to generosity and courage, on the one hand ; and the irresistible charm of feminine beauty and modesty to a manly heart, on the other, would speedily and insensibly, between Moses, and some one of the priest of Midian's fair daughters, ripen into love. What follows, therefore, is all in the course of honest nature, which never swerves from her purpose, never fails to accomplish her end. But it was Providence that furnished the field and the instruments with which nature should work. That Providence which saved him forty years before from perishing in the Nile ; that Providence which delivered him so lately from the hands of an incensed king ; the same Providence now, by a concourse of circumstances equally beyond the reach of human power or foresight, fixes the bounds of his habitation, forms for him the most important connexion of human life ; and for another space of forty years makes him forget the tumultuous pleasures of a court, in the more calm and rational delights of disinterested friendship, virtuous affection, and heavenly contemplation.

It was in this delicious retreat, that the man of God is supposed to have composed, by divine inspiration, and to have committed to writing, that most ancient, most elegant, and most instructive of all books ; which contains the history of the world, from the creation down to his own times : a period which no other writer has presumed to touch upon ; holy ground which none but the foot of God himself has dared to tread. Here also, and at this time, as it is conjectured by interpreters, he wrote that beautifully poetical, moral and historical work, the book of Job : which, for sublimity of thought, force of expression, justness

of sentiment, strength of reasoning, and variety of matter, holds a distinguished place in the sacred code. If from the schools of the Magi he drew such stores of wisdom and eloquence, high must our ideas rise of those noble seminaries of learning. But Moses derived his wonderful accomplishments from a much higher source, even from the everlasting Spring of all knowledge, even from Him who made the heavens and the earth, and caused the light to arise; even from Him who can make the desert of Horeb a school of WISDOM, and the simple to be wiser than all his teachers. Here, also, he has the felicity of becoming a father; and, even in Midian, God builds up one of the families of Israel.

And now at last the time to favour that despised, oppressed nation was come. Egypt had changed its sovereign in the mean time, but the seed of Jacob had felt no mitigation of their distress. Every change which they have undergone is only from evil to worse. Moses was now arrived at his eightieth year, but remained in the full vigour of his bodily strength, and of his mental powers. Erring, reasoning, cavilling man will be asking, Why was the employment of Moses in so important a service so long delayed? Wherefore bury such talents for such a space of time in the inglorious life of an obscure shepherd? Wherefore call a man at so late a period of life, in the evening of his day, in the decline of his faculties, to a service that required all the fervour, intrepidity and exertion of youth? To all which we answer in the words of our Saviour on a well-known occasion, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Man is perpetually in a hurry, and often hastens forward without making progress; but "he that believeth shall not make haste." GOD, the father of believers, advances to his end not in a vehement and hurried step, but in a solemn, steady, majestic pace; his progress, which we may in our folly account slow, in the issue proves to

to have been the most expeditious ; and the course which human ignorance may condemn as irregular and circuitous, will be found in the end the shortest and the surest.

The course of the history then has brought us to that important, eventful hour, when the shepherd of Midian, trained up in retirement and contemplation, and converse with God, was to shake off his disguise, and stand confessed the minister of the most high God, the king in Jeshurun, the scourge of Egypt, the deliverer of Israel. As the commission which was given him to execute, and the station assigned to him, were altogether singular and uncommon, we are not to be surprised if the seal and signature affixed to that commission, and the powers bestowed for the faithful and effectual execution of it, should likewise be out of the usual course of things, and should announce the power and authority of Him who granted it. But as this merits a principal place in the course of these exercises, we shall not compress it into the conclusion of a Lecture ; hoping, through the help of God, to resume and continue the subject next Lord's day.

Such was Moses, the Jewish legislator and hero, during the two first great periods of his life. But a greater than Moses is here, even He, "the latchet of whose shoes Moses is unworthy to stoop down and unloose ;" to whom Moses and Elias, on the mount of transfiguration, brought all their glory and honour, and laid them at his feet !

Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ;" and Jesus disdained not to be called "the son of the carpenter." Supreme, all divine though He was, yet he declined not the society of the poorest, meanest, most afflicted of mankind !

Was the humiliation of Moses cheerful and voluntary, not forcibly obtruded upon him, but sought out and submitted to ? Christ, though "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon

upon him the form of a servant.” Was sympathy a leading feature in the character of Moses? Jesus “hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him he heard.”* “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”† Did Moses, through the vale of obscurity, arrive at the summit of glory? Of Christ it is said, as following up the scene of his humiliation, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” But the time would fail to point out every mark of resemblance. Christ derives no glory from similitude to Moses, but all the glory of Moses flows from his typifying Christ the Lord, in whom “all the promises are yea and amen,” and who “is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

* Psal. xxii. 24.

† Isai. lxiii. 9.

History of Moses.

LECTURE III.

EXODUS iii. 13, 14.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you ; and they shall say to me, What is his name ? What shall I say unto them ? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM ; And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

THE objects presented to us in the commerce of the world have a relative greatness, but those with which we converse in solitude and retirement possess a real grandeur and magnificence. A vast city, a numerous and well-disciplined army, a proud navy, a splendid court, and the like, dazzle the eyes of a stranger, and produce a transient wonder and delight. But a little acquaintance dissolves the charm ; the dimensions of created greatness speedily contract, the glory departs, and what once filled us with astonishment is regarded with calm indifference, perhaps with disgust. The eye, almost with a single glance, reaches the end of human perfection, and instantly turns from what it has seen, in search of something yet undiscovered, striving to find in novelty and variety a compensation for the poverty, littleness, nothingness of the creature. But when we withdraw from the haunts of men, and either retire within ourselves or send our thoughts abroad to contemplate God and his works, we meet a height

height and a depth which the line of finite understanding cannot fathom ; we expatiate in a region which still discloses new scenes of wonder ; we feel ourselves at once invited and checked, attracted and repelled ; we behold much that we can comprehend and explain, but much more that passeth knowledge ; we find ourselves, like Moses at the bush, upon " holy ground," and the same wonderful sight is exhibited to our view—" JEHOVAH!" IN A FLAME OF FIRE ! whose light irradiates and encourages our approach ; but whose fervent heat arrests our speed, and remands us to our proper distance.

That great man had now passed the second great period of his life in the humble station of a shepherd, and the shepherd too of another man's flock. He had quitted the enchanted regions of high life, not only without regret, but with joy ; not impelled by spleen, not soured by disappointment ; but filled with a noble disdain for empty honours, with generous sympathy towards his afflicted brethren, animated by exalted piety which settled on an invisible God, and inspired with a soul which looked at pomp with contempt, and on obscurity with acquiescence and desire. It was in this calm retreat that he cultivated those qualities, which proved more favourable to the designs of Providence than all the learning which he had acquired in Egypt.

At the age of eighty the race of glory is at an end with most men ; nay, the drama of life concludes with the generality long before that period arrives. But the fame, activity and usefulness of Moses commenced not till then ; for as it is never too early, so it is never too late to serve God and to do good to men ; and true wisdom consists in waiting for and following the call of Heaven, not in anticipating and outrunning it. Abraham was turned out a wanderer and an exile at seventy-five. And Moses at four-score was sent upon an enterprise, which it required much courage to undertake, much vigour to conduct and support,

port, and a great length of time to execute. But before the divine mandate every mountain of difficulty sinks, “ every valley is exalted, the crooked becomes straight, and the rough places plain.” Abraham, at the head of a handful of servants, subdues five victorious kings, with their armies : Sarah, at ninety, bears a son ; and Moses, at eighty, with a simple rod in his hand, advances to succour Israel, and to crush the power of Egypt.

The solemnity with which the commission was given suited the dignity and importance of the undertaking. The whole was of God, and HE does every thing in a manner worthy of himself. While Moses was employed in the innocent cares and labours of his lowly station ; and faithful attention to the duties of our several stations is the best preparation for the visits of the Almighty ; a very unusual and unaccountable appearance presented itself to his eyes. A bush wholly involved in flames, yet continuing unchanged, undiminished, unconsumed by the fire. Whether nature preserves her steady tenor, or suffers an alteration or suspension of the laws by which she is usually governed, the finger of God is equally visible in both ; for, what power, save that which is divine, could have established and can maintain the order and harmony of the universe ? And what power short of Oinnipotence can break in upon that order ; can make the sun to stand still, or its shadow return back to the meridian after it had declined ; can leave to fire its illuminating, but withdraw its devouring quality ; and render artificial fire, such as that of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, harmless to the three children of the captivity, but fatal to the ministers of the king of Babylon ? Were our hearts right with God, miraculous interpositions would be unnecessary ; every creature, every event should promote our acquaintance with our Maker. And such is the condescension of the Most High, that he vouchsafes to cure our ignorance, inattention or unbelief, by making the mighty

mighty sacrifice of that stated course of things, which his wisdom settled at first, and which his power continues to support. Rather than man shall remain unchanged, unredeemed, the great system of nature shall undergo alteration ; fire shall cease to burn, the Nile shall run blood instead of water, the sun forget to shine for three days together ; the eternal uncreated Word shall become flesh, and the fountain of life to all, shall expire in death.

It required not the sagacity of a Moses to discover, that there was something extraordinary here. But mistaking it at first for merely an unusual, natural appearance, whose cause, by a closer investigation, he might be able to discover, he is preparing by nearer observation to satisfy his curiosity ; when lo ! to his still greater astonishment, the bush becomes vocal as well as brilliant, and he hears his own name distinctly and repeatedly called, out of the midst of the flame. Curiosity and wonder are now checked by a more powerful principle than either. Terror thrills in every vain, and arrests his trembling steps. How dreadful must the visitations of God's anger be to his enemies, if to his best beloved children, the intimations of his goodness, clothed in any thing like sensible glory, be so awful and overwhelming ? When I meet thee, O my God, stripped of this veil of flesh, may I find thee a pure, a genial and lambent flame of loving-kindness, not a consuming fire of wrath and vengeance !

Moses instantly comprehends that the Lord was there ; or, if he could for a moment have doubted who it was that talked with him, in a moment his doubt must have been removed by the continuation of the voice of Him who spake. We find here, as in many other places of the Old Testament, the same person who is styled, in the course of the narration, the "Angel of the Lord," styling himself JEHOVAH and GOD ; exercising divine prerogatives, manifesting divine perfections, and claiming the homage which is due

due to Deity alone. The person therefore, thus described, can be none other than the uncreated "Angel of the covenant," who "at sundry times, and in divers manners," in maturing the work of redemption, assumed a sensible appearance ; and at length, in the fulness of time, united his divine nature to ours, and dwelt among men, and made them "to behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Every thing here is singular, and every thing instructive. The first interview between God and Moses inspires terror ; but the spirit of bondage gradually dies away, and refines into the spirit of adoption and love. Acquaintance begets confidence, "perfect love casteth out fear ;" and the man who spake to God with trembling in Horeb, by and by becomes strengthened to endure his presence forty days and nights together, in Sinai. "Enduring, as seeing Him who is invisible," he "despised the wrath of an earthly king." When he comes to the knowledge of that same God, by the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear, he "exceedingly fears and quakes ; abhors himself, and lies low in dust and ashes." But, following on to know the Lord, he comes at length to converse with Him, as a man with his friend. "Acquaint thyself then with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." Miserable beyond expression, beyond thought are they, whose acquaintance with God has to begin at death ; who having lived without a gracious, merciful, long-suffering God in the world, find they must, by a dreadful necessity, fall into the hands of a neglected, forgotten, righteous, incensed God, when they leave it.

The appearance of Jehovah in the bush was not only preternatural, but emblematical ; it not only sanctioned the commission given to Moses by the seal of Deity, but exhibited a lively representation of the state of his church and people in Egypt ; oppressed, but not crushed, brought low, but not deserted of Heaven,

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in the midst of flames, but not consumed. And it is a striking emblem of the church of God in the world, to the end of time ; “ troubled on every side, yet not distressed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed.”

The same voice which solicited intercourse with Moses, which tendered friendship, which encouraged hope, sets a fence about the divine Majesty ; it reminds him of his distance, of his impurity ; it forbids rashness, presumption, familiarity. In veneration of the spot which God had honoured with his special presence, he is commanded to “ put off his shoes from off his feet :” a mandate, which by an image natural and obvious, enjoins the drawing near to God in holy places, and in sacred services, with seriousness, attention and reverence ; divested of that impurity which men necessarily contract by coming into frequent contact with the world. And surely, it is owing to the want of a due sense of the majesty of God upon our spirits, that his house is profaned and his service marred by levity, carelessness and inattention. Did we seriously consider that the place where we stand is “ holy ground,” that the word which we speak and hear is “ not the word of men, but of the living God,” could one short hour’s attendance betray us into slumber ? Could the little jealousies and strife of a base world intrude into a worshipping heart ? Could the eye find leisure to wander upon the dress and appearance of another ? Durst a scornful leer or simpering countenance communicate from one vain, silly, irreverent spirit to another, the private sneer and censure ? Would there be a contention for place and pre-eminence ? Now, surely, God is as really, though less sensibly, in this place, as he was in the bush at Horeb : and though we see him not, his eyes are continually upon us, and he will bring every thing into judgment. O Lord, open thou our eyes, that we may behold Thee, and every other object shall instantly disappear.

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The words which follow, if any thing can increase their intrinsic force and importance, derive a peculiar energy and value to the christian world, as the passage quoted by our blessed Lord, from an authority which they could not deny, to confute the Sadducees, on the subject of the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body. “I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God Jacob.” We speak of the dead, under the idea that they *were*; but God represents them as still existing, and his relation to them as unbroken, his care of them as uninterrupted. The effect which this declaration had upon Moses, is such as might have been expected; no more “turning aside to see this great sight;” he hides his face, “afraid to look upon God.” It is ignorance of God, not intimate communion, which encourages forwardness and freedom. Angels, who know him best, and love him most, are most sensible of their distance, and are represented as “covering their faces with their wings” when they approach their dread Creator.

In the declaration which immediately follows, under a sanction so solemn and affecting, which shall we most admire, the mercy and goodness of God, or his perfect wisdom and foreknowledge? Four hundred years have elapsed since this wretched state of his posterity had been foretold and revealed to Abraham. For wise and gracious purposes it was appointed and brought to pass. But the days of darkness are now almost ended, and the sun returns. Like rain from heaven to a dry and thirsty land, the promises of favour and salvation fall upon a persecuted, oppressed people; and “that Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge?” is after an interval of forty years sent back to Egypt, on the kind and merciful errand of salvation to an oppressed and persecuted people.

Moses however, it would appear, has not forgotten the sultry reception which his well-meant interposition had met with from his brethren so long before; and

and presumes to urge it as a reason, why a person of more influence and authority should be entrusted with the commission.

He considered not, that formerly he acted from the impulse of his own mind; with indeed an upright and benevolent intention, but with a zeal rather too bold and impetuous; whereas now, he was following the direction of Providence, and was therefore certain of success. As there is a sinful pride which urges men to seek stations and employments, to which they have neither pretension, title, nor qualification; so there is a sinful humility, which shrinks from the call of God, which, in the guise of self-denial, contains the spirit of rebellion and disobedience; and which, under the affectation of undervaluing and debasing our own persons and qualities, indirectly charges God with foolishness, in choosing an instrument so inapt and improper. Such humility is of the very essence of pride, and such, with regret we observe it, was the spirit by which Moses was on this occasion actuated. The heavenly vision removes the objection at once, by assuring him of the divine presence, blessing and support; and refers him for the proof of it, to a train of events closely succeeding each other; and all issuing in the people's assembling together, in that very spot, to worship, after their enfranchisement, all forming a chain of evidence, that the authority under which he acted was divine.

Still doubting and irresolute, Moses ventures to urge another difficulty, which he expresses in these terms; "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you: and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" God had already declared his name, and purpose, and given his charge, and yet Moses dares to make inquiry. How rare a thing it is, to see a soul wholly resolved into the will of God! How seldom do we find a faith entirely disposed to be, to do, and to endure, neither more nor less than

than what God is pleased to appoint ! But the incredulity and presumption of Moses shall not render the design of God of none effect. When men are contradicted or opposed, they fly out, and storm, and threaten. But the great God bears with our forwardness and folly, gives way to our scruples, and, yielding to our obstinacy, overcomes evil with good. And we are almost tempted to rejoice that Moses stood out so long, as it gave occasion to the most solemn and satisfying proclamation of the name and nature of God, from his own mouth, and the most amiable and engaging picture of tender mercy and long-suffering that ever was exhibited. “ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM : And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

What flimsy things are commissions issued under the hand-writing and seals of kings, compared to this ! a shred of parchment, a morsel of wax, an unmeaning scrawl ; a slender, contracted, short-lived power, delegated from one worm to another. Where is now the signet of Ahasuerus, which pretended to communicate irreversible authority to the writing whereto it was affixed ? Where are the warrants under which the statesmen and heroes of other times deliberated, fought and conquered ? With the princes who granted them they are gone to oblivion. They *were* what they *were*. They fulfilled their day, and then they fell asleep, and now are seen no more ! What avail the long list of empty titles, which potentates and princes, in the pride of their hearts, affix to their perishing names ? All, all shrink and fade, before that tremendous Power, whose authority no change of circumstances can affect, whose existence no succession of ages can impair ; who, yesterday, to-day and forever still proclaims of himself, “ I AM.”

Nothing can equal the simplicity, sublimity and force of these remarkable words. Independency of existence, eternity of duration, immutability of purpose,

pose, faithfulness and truth in keeping covenant and shewing mercy, are all conveyed in one little sentence, “I AM THAT I AM.” Longinus, the celebrated critic, has with equal judgment and taste, quoted a well-known passage from the writings of Moses, as an instance of the true sublime, viz. the first words pronounced by the Creator in the formation of the world, “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” Why did not Longinus dip deeper into the works of this great historian; why did he not enrich and embellish his own beautiful little book, and farther approve his exquisite taste, by inserting other passages from the page of inspiration, particularly the passage under review? A passage which Jews, Heathens and Christians, as one man have consented to admire.

Under the sanction of this most awful name, God repeats his commission, repeats his charge, repeats his promise of support, assistance and success: success with the elders of Israel; success with the people; success against Pharaoh. And yet, Moses “staggers at this promise,” although it be the promise of the Eternal, through unbelief!” What have we most to wonder at here, the strange incredulity and perverseness of the *prophet*, or the singular fidelity and exactness of the *historian*, in recording his own errors? God had said, “they *shall* hearken to thy voice:” yet Moses presumes, in the face of this express declaration, to gainsay and draw back—And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they *will* not believe me; nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.” Surely “the LORD is God, and not man, and therefore the children of men are not consumed.” A man of common spirit would here have broken off the conference, and left the timid, froward shepherd to his own folly, and permitted him to remain destitute of the honour which he obstinately persevered to decline. But it pleased

pleased God to shew us patience, at least in one instance, too powerful for unbelief : “ for his ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.”

He who would cure infidelity in others, must first be purged of the old leaven himself. To effect this in the heart of his servant Moses, God vouchsafes to perform miracle upon miracle. He turns the rod which was in the hand of Moses into a serpent ; and from a serpent to a rod again : in order to intimate to him and to the world that the most harmless things become noxious, and the most pernicious things innocent, at his command. His hand is in a moment covered with leprosy, and in a moment restored—to shew the power of God’s holy law to fix guilt upon the sinner, and of his grace to remove it from the penitent. He is enjoined and authorized to perform these signs before all Israel, in order to produce that conviction in them, which they had first wrought upon his own mind. Should these still happen to fail, he is permitted to go a step farther. Nature shall submit to a thorough alteration, rather than the seed of faithful Abraham continue slaves in Egypt, or perish through unbelief. Water shall become blood before their eyes, rather than the blood of their innocent children be poured out any more like water upon the ground.

And now, surely, Moses is gained, and the work of God shall no longer stand still. Alas ! the fullness of spirit is not yet subdued. Though forced to retreat, he continues to fight as he retires. The flowness of Israel to believe, was formerly the plea ; now his own want of talents is urged in excuse of his strange backwardness and disobedience. That objection too is immediately removed, by a promise of wisdom and eloquence suited to the occasion. The language of the oracle, and the long-suffering of the speaker, are miraculous and supernatural, as all the other circumstances of the case. And the LORD said unto him,

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Who hath made man's mouth ? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind ? Have not I the Lord ? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”*

“ Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth !” This, instead of producing humble submission and instantaneous compliance, without a reason and without a plea, meets with a direct refusal ; “ O my Lord, send I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.” And now what heart does not tremble for fear, that the fire which had spared the bush, should wax hot, to punish the madness of the prophet ? What patience can endure such a repetition of insult ? The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses ; and— and what ? O it becomes a flame of love to melt his heart, and purify it of its dross. “ The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother ? I know that he can speak well. And also behold, he cometh forth to meet thee ; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.” Providence had all this while been preparing a concluding, a convincing proof of power, wisdom and goodness inconceivable. Lo, Aaron is already far advanced on his way from Egypt, in quest of his brother.

That, after so long an interval, through a field of so many chances, he should at that very instant of time arrive—How is it to be accounted for ? On no other principle but this, the Lord is “ wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” “ He seeth the end from the beginning.” He faith, “ My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure.” “ He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” Let every knee bow, let every tongue confess, let every heart adore and love and submit.

Moses

* Exodus iv. 11, 12.

Moses is at length subdued, and we stand with astonishment and joy to contemplate the triumph of mercy over judgment. God grant we may improve the example of his divine patience as a pattern. God in mercy preserve us from presuming upon it, as an encouragement to offend. And may God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

History of Moses.

LECTURE IV.

EXODUS vi. 9.

And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel ; but they hearkned not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

EVERY nation has in its history events of peculiar importance, which latest posterity is disposed fondly to commemorate. But the memory of remarkable deliverances is necessarily blended with the recollection of heavy distress or imminent danger, and whether as men, or as citizens, we greatly rejoice, by that very joy we expressly declare that we, or our fathers, once had cause to mourn. Perpetual sunshine suits not the state of the natural world ; perpetual success is by no means favourable either to human happiness or virtue. Hunger is necessary to give a relish to food ; the gloom of winter is the happiest recommendation of the cheerfulness and bloom of spring. We discover the value of health by disease ; and the blessings of peace would be but half understood, were it not for the antecedent anxieties and calamities of war. Men therefore act foolishly as well as impiously when they charge the wise, righteous and merciful Governor of the world, with carelessness or unkindness, because he admits into the system of his works, or into his moral government of the universe, what ignorance calls disorder, what presumption cries down as unnecessary, and pride condemns as unjust.

What

What so irregular at first sight, and always so to the vulgar eye, as the face of the starry heavens? A handful of little sparks, scattered at random in the air! But to the attentive, inquiring, enlightened spirit, they present a vast combination of worlds, each in its place, every one moving in its proper orbit; the whole possessing every quality that can at once excite astonishment and inspire delight; greatness, order, beauty, harmony, utility! They present excellencies obvious to the slightest observation of the most shallow understanding; excellencies undiscoverable by the closest investigation of the most penetrating genius. Now, clownish thoughtlessness and stupidity is not more incompetent to judge of the order and frame of nature, than passion and prejudice, by which all men are governed, are to determine upon the wisdom and goodness of the ways of Providence. Every man would have every thing bend to his humour, convenience, indolence or interest. This would produce, were it permitted, endless confusion and misery, did not God overrule and employ the activity and the indolence, the senseless caprices and the jarring interests of men to execute his purposes, and without their intention, nay, in spite of their efforts, make them productive of regularity, stability and happiness.

In contemplating, therefore, agents and events, those of which we have heard and read, or those which we see and in which we are concerned, the only road to composure and improvement is, to consider the whole as the work of a supreme, intelligent, almighty, invisible Agent, who is carrying on a plan which we comprehend not, or understand only in part, and who, from all that we can know of him from nature, from experience and from revelation, takes delight in shewing mercy and doing good, but who, in the exercise of even these gracious prerogatives, governs not himself by the partial lights, hasty conceptions and contracted views of ignorant, erring men, but by his own all-comprehending

comprehending intelligence, all-pervading benignity, all-subduing love.

If, in that portion of ancient history which is now to come under our consideration, we observe Providence treating one nation with uncommon severity, and another with indulgence altogether as singular, we are to regard the parties not as they are in themselves, or in relation to each other, but in their relation to God and to mankind in general, as an important link in the great chain of Providence, as serving and instructing the human race to the end of the world. The perverseness and unbelief of Moses met with pity and forgiveness, and were cured by a series of miracles. The impiety and unbelief of Pharaoh meet with resentment and punishment, and were even confirmed and strengthened by a most awful series of miracles; not for the sake of Moses and Pharaoh merely, but to illustrate in the eyes of the whole world the goodness and severity of God; the wisdom and safety of repentance and submission on the one hand, the madness and danger of impenitence on the other. Egypt was plagued, and Israel saved, that violence and cruelty might be awakened to see the naked sword of justice suspended by a single hair over its guilty throat; and that misery and depression might find a refuge from despair.

We have seen with what solemnity the commission to Moses for the deliverance of Israel was granted, and the awful seal which was appended to it; even the great and fearful name, JEHOVAH, "I AM THAT I AM." We have seen the backwardness, irresolution and timidity of the prophet, in undertaking an employment so flattering to ambition, so desirable to the spirit of patriotism, so elevating to a mind awake to the influence of religion. We have seen the goodness and condescension of God in deigning, by repeated exertions of power and mercy, to remove the scruples and level the objections of incredulity and fear. And we have seen Aaron, the brother of Moses, providentially

tially conducted to the spot, and at the moment, to establish a belief in the divine power and veracity, to confirm the wavering, trembling soul, and constituted to a share of the diligence, difficulty, danger and glory of the illustrious enterprize.

Behold then two plain old men, one of eighty, and the other of eighty-three years old, setting out from the deserts of Arabia, on an undertaking to human reason the most wild and romantic that ever was attempted ; to persuade or to constrain one of the most powerful princes of the world to enfranchise, nay, to dismiss the tenth part of his most valuable and useful subjects ! And how are they provided for this vast undertaking ? The pleas of reason, the powers of eloquence, the calls of humanity, the claims of justice, it is well known, make but a feeble impression on the hearts of kings, when their pride, ambition or interest oppose. For such a vast multitude to slip away by stealth is impossible, and to think of forcing an escape from a power so greatly superior is rashness and ruin. When *men* engage in hazardous and difficult expeditions, they levy armies, accumulate treasure, provide magazines, strengthen themselves with alliances. But when *God* addresses himself to action, we behold no apparatus, no effort. Is an universe to start out of nothing ? “ *God speaks, and it is done.* ” Is a sun to arise, and light to shine ? *God* says, “ *Let there be light.* ” Is a great nation to be subdued, and a little one asserted into liberty ? Our eyes are directed, not to a general at the head of a mighty host, but to a shepherd with his crook in his hand.

But the commands of Heaven break not in upon the sacred duties and the virtuous charities of private life. The charge given to *Moses* was pressing, the object most important, and the authority under which it was issued, supreme ; but yet he is permitted to return for a little while, to attend to the calls of nature, of gratitude, to the gentle claims of filial piety, of conjugal and paternal affection. He went back to his

father-

father-in-law to acknowledge his protection, hospitality and kindness to him when a stranger, to inform him of the extraordinary commission he had just received, and the necessity he was thereby laid under of immediately entering upon the execution of it; to obtain his consent for this purpose, and to ask his paternal benediction. Religion is in a happy state in the soul of that man, who has learned to unite and reconcile the views and pursuits of the citizen with those of the private man; who pleads not the performance of one duty as an excuse for the omission of another; whose life exhibits every moral and divine principle in action, every one in his season, every one in his place. How simple and affectionate the dismission which honest Raguel gave to Moses, compared to that of the selfish, rapacious Laban to Jacob:—"Go in peace!" says Raguel; an adieu expressive at once of submission to the will of Providence, and of affection to his son-in-law, mixed with regret at the thought of parting with him.

It pleased God again to confirm the confidence of Moses, by assuring him that all who had ever harboured a design against his life were now dead; and that nothing therefore remained, but to address himself boldly to his great work. Accompanied with his wife and two sons, he leaves the land of Midian, and proceeds towards Egypt.

On this journey, a very extraordinary incident occurs: but the conciseness of the sacred history leaves it involved in much darkness and difficulty. God had blessed him with two sons in Midian, whom, in compliance with the commandment of God, and as a son of Abraham, he ought to have circumcised on the eighth day from their birth. This however, either for want of the proper minister, from inattention, or out of improper respect to the feelings or prejudices of Zipporah his wife, or some other reason that appears not, had been hitherto wholly neglected; and thereby

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* Gen. xxxi. 26, &c.

his children, the younger at least, through his neglect, seems to have incurred the dreadful penalty denounced by the terms of the covenant against uncircumcised persons, that of being “cut off from his people.” This punishment God seems disposed to exact at the hand of Moses himself, who was indeed the guilty person, by attacking him either with a threatening bodily distemper, by remorse of conscience for his criminal neglect, by the appearance of an avenging angel, or some other sensible token of displeasure. But the difficulty is, Why the conduct of Moses in this respect was never called in question before? Why he was not purged of this guilt before he was honoured at all with the divine commission? Why the precept was enforced upon a journey, and at an inn, where the operation could be performed less commodiously, and was accompanied with some degree of danger? What could Zipporah mean when she reproached Moses as “a bloody husband?” The passage is evidently enveloped in much obscurity; and probably with design. Instead of curiously inquiring into its hidden meaning, an attempt vain and unprofitable, we may, by the blessing of God, learn from it more than one practical lesson, neither obscure nor unimportant; and this, no doubt, the Spirit of God principally intended. The first is, that no circumstances of prudence or conveniency can ever be with propriety urged as a dispensation with a clearly commanded duty. Secondly, that as there may be a sinful undervaluing of the feelings, prejudices and inclinations of our near and dear relations, so there may be a sinful tenderness for, and compliance with them, to the neglect of God’s known and declared will, and at the risk of falling under his just censure. Thirdly, that he who is to be the interpreter of the law to others, ought in all points to be blameless, and in all things conformed to the law himself. To which we may add yet a fourth, not of less importance than any of these; namely, that when God has procured the

proper

proper respect to his revealed will, the controversy between him and the offender is at an end, the object of his government being not so much to avenge himself as to amend the criminal.

This scene of domestic danger and distress is speedily followed by another of a pleasanter kind, namely, the interview between the two brothers, in the wilderness; an interview attended with many circumstances to render it mutually interesting and satisfactory. It must have been highly gratifying to Moses, after living forty years among strangers, to meet his own brother, to receive particular information concerning his family and nation, and to communicate to a friendly ear the knowledge of his own situation during so long an interval. What must it have been, on the other hand, to Aaron, to learn from the mouth of his brother the great designs of Providence respecting themselves and their people? With what overflowings of heart would they mingle their sighs and tears! With what ardour would their united prayers, and vows, and praises ascend to heaven? How confirmed the faith, how forward the zeal of each, strengthened and stimulated by that of the other! They go on their way rejoicing; they are following GOD, and they must prosper.

Moses had found the evidence of his divine mission completed, in the opportune arrival of his brother Aaron, according to the declaration of the oracle at the bush; and he soon finds a resolution of his first doubt, in the very entrance upon the discharge of his office. Compare the first, and the two last verses of this 4th chapter, and see what a contrast they form to one another. "And Moses answered, and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." "And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had

had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads, and worshipped." The tremendous name JEHOVAH affixed as a signet to the record, and vouching its authority by sign upon sign, quickly produces belief; and inspires gratitude and joy, corrected by reverence and godly fear. So far, then, the way is cleared, and Moses is no longer rejected as an upstart and intruder, as presuming to take upon himself the office of prince and judge over his brethren.

But this is the smallest difficulty in the way. Who does not eagerly cleave to the prospect of returning liberty? Men believe things incredible, attempt things impossible, endure things intolerable, when freedom, precious freedom is the object. No wonder then that oppressed, groaning Israel should greedily listen to the voice of this heavenly charmer. But the grand difficulties are yet behind. Their fetters will not fall off by a wish. Their fond desires dictate not the edicts of Pharaoh. The smarting of the strokes of their task-masters' whips are not to be conjured away by a sound. The question is not, will Israel believe; but, will the king of Egypt comply? Every step Moses advances, he finds a new and growing proof of the truth and faithfulness of God. For the same mouth which declared concerning the children of Israel, "they shall hearken unto thy voice," declared concerning Pharaoh, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no not by a mighty hand." The faith and obedience of the one, therefore, and the insolence and pride of the other, equally and conjointly demonstrated to Moses, that the Lord had spoken unto him.

Armed, therefore, with a command from on high, confident of the goodness of their cause, and exalted above the fear of man, Moses and his brother advance boldly into the presence of the king, and make their requisition in these lofty and majestic words; "Thus

faith

faith the LORD GOD of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness."

In some ancient Jewish fragments, we have an account of four miracles, by which Moses signalized his entrance into Egypt. First, he made fire to issue out of the earth, in the eyes of all Israel, and thereby produced confidence in him as their deliverer. Secondly, being shut up in prison by order of Pharaoh, he broke the bars, burst open the gates, struck the guards with death, and released himself. Thirdly, he pronounced in the ears of the king, the name of JEHOVAH—at the sound of which that prince became deaf, and after a certain interval recovered his hearing, through the interposition of him who had taken it away. Fourthly, by the use of the same awful name, he deprived all the Egyptian priests of sense and motion. To this the Rabbins add, that on entering the palace of the tyrant, he was suddenly clothed with a dreadful form, and a countenance bright and majestic, like that of an angel. But we have no need to resort to fancy for a description of the magnificence of the scene, neither is there reason to suppose that any part of the glory of Moses consisted in personal lustre. His Employer and his errand lend him sufficient dignity and importance, without the glare which dazzles the eye.

Whatever were the outward appearance of Moses, his message, we know, was treated by Pharaoh with insolence and contempt, in these words ; " Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." We are not to conclude that Pharaoh was an atheist, from his using this impious language. No : Egypt was a country wholly given to superstition ; a land which had multiplied deities to itself. It was JEHOVAH whom he scorned to acknowledge. It was the God of Israel whom he despised. He judged of the power of their Patron and Protector from their own present forlorn condition.

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The methods which Moses and Aaron employed to obtain the end of their mission, is a beautiful, an instructive, and an alarming representation of the conduct of Providence, toward sinners in general. They begin with delivering a plain message, in the name of their master. Being repulsed, they proceed to argue and expostulate. A deaf ear being turned to the voice of reason and humanity, they have recourse to more extraordinary proofs of the weight and authority of their commission ; proofs which, indeed, mark an Almighty arm ; but an arm stretched out to convince, not to crush. A bold defiance being given to Omnipotence, what other method of working conviction and of procuring respect is left, but to let it fall with all its dreadful weight on the head of the defier ?

It happened to Israel, as it often does to men struggling to get free from the pressure of calamity, their efforts only serve to plunge them deeper in the mire ; and it happened to Moses and Aaron, as it sometimes befalls men actuated by a similar good intention, but with less title and encouragement, their interference hurts those whom it was meant to serve ; and they have the mortification of seeing the miseries of their poor brethren cruelly increased, through what might be deemed their own zeal and officiousness. The inflexible tyrant avenges himself, for the freedom taken with the king of Egypt, by persons so low and contemptible, upon the bleeding shoulders of thousands of wretches, who could not redress themselves, and who durst not complain. Miserable condition indeed ! where the caprice of one man determines the fate of millions ! Happy the nation where not men but laws govern !

Providence, in this instance, seems resolved to try how far savage cruelty and patient suffering can go ; but ready to interfere in both, when they have come to the extreme. Israel is not prepared for salvation, till the cup of woe is full, and deliverance is despaired of from every quarter save Heaven : and Pharaoh feels

feels not the rod of God's anger, till having filled up the measure of his iniquity, hardened his heart against God and against man, poured contempt upon mercy, and braved infinite justice, he exalts himself into an awful monument to every impenitent sinner, of the desperate madness of fighting with his Maker.

Moses is ready to sink afresh, under this cruel disappointment. The reproaches of the unhappy sufferers, called, forced, lashed into labour, beyond what their strength could bear, cut him to the heart, and again he shrinks from the task which was imposed on him : and in these desponding words, he ventures to pour out the anguish of his soul before the Lord ; " Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people ? Why is it that thou hast sent me ? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name he hath done evil to this people, neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Thus far has flowed the angry tide of proud-imperial passion ; and thus low has ebbed the trembling, retreating stream of baffled expectation. And now, " It is time, Lord, that thou work !" To the one he faith, " Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." To the other, " Return, and fill all thy channels, and overflow all thy banks."

The Angel of the Lord begins with re-assuring Moses himself, by a recapitulation of the tenour of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, under the sanction of his name as the **LORD GOD ALMIGHTY**. In all these wanderings, weaknesses and distresses, they had been encouraged to trust in a Being, omnipotent to protect them, all-sufficient to supply their wants. But their posterity were henceforth to know him by another name, and under a new description, even the incommunicable, unutterable name which denotes eternal, unchangeable self-existence ; deriving nothing from any, but conferring upon all, life, and breath, and all things ; who is above all, through all,

all, and in all ; “ the same yesterday, to-day, and for-ever :” and, of consequence, true to his word, faithful in keeping covenant, unalterable in his decrees !

Under the seal of that most tremendous, most animating and inspiring name, Moses is again dispatched to the people, with the assurance of a speedy, an instantaneous appearance in their behalf. But alas ! their spirit is broken, by the long continuance and accumulated weight of their calamities. They have been disappointed so often, that they can believe, can hope no longer ; and the message delivered by Moses is like a charming song upon the ear of a deaf or a dead man. He is sent from the people to Pharaoh, with a repetition of the demand of Heaven upon him. But alas ! the messenger himself has caught the desponding spirit of the unhappy men whom he had been last visiting ; and the heart of Pharaoh has not in the least relented. Heaven seems to have interposed somewhat too late ; the cause appears lost. Let us judge nothing rashly ; let us not judge before the time. Let us humbly and patiently wait the issue, and then condemn if we dare, if we can.

—Moses at the bush saw GOD, under the appearance of a flame of fire ; but no man can see GOD and live. “ No man hath seen GOD at any time : the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The deliverer of Israel needed himself to be nurtured and prepared for the discharge of his high office ; but the Saviour of a lost world entered upon the execution of his infinitely more arduous task, every way qualified to bring it to a happy conclusion. The Jewish lawgiver stood himself condemned by the law, and was a partaker with others in guilt and transgression ; the Christian Leader was “ holy, harmless and undefiled.” Moses undertook the work assigned to him, slowly and reluctantly ; but, O with what readiness did the friend of mankind press forward to the perfecting of his kind design ; “ Lo I come : in the volume of the book it

is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”* “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?”† And yet there was no shame, no pain, no cross in the way of Moses; whereas the Captain of salvation was to be “made perfect through sufferings; nevertheless, he advanced undismayed to the combat. “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.”‡ Moses frequently fled from the conflict, shrank from the difficulty and danger, failed in the hour of trial; but our great Leader and Commander went on “conquering and to conquer;” turned not back; desisted not from doing and from suffering, till he could say, “*It is finished.*” The Sun of righteousness shineth in his strength, let every star hide his diminished head. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

* Psal. xl. 7, 8.

† Luke xii. 50.

‡ Ib. xxii. 15.

History of Moses.

LECTURE V.

EXODUS vi. 1.

Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do unto Pharaoh ; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

THE history of the divine conduct is the best illustration of the nature of GOD. Do we desire to know what the Supreme Being *is*? We have but to consider what he *does*. Are we anxious to be satisfied of the truth of the declarations made by the great JEHOVAH concerning himself in his word? Let us compare them with the history and experience of men in every age. The proofs of the divine goodness and mercy are written in characters so fair, and are so frequently presented to our view, that not to observe them must argue the grossest stupidity and inattention; and not to acknowledge, love and adore the glorious Source of that unbounded goodness, must argue the blackest ingratitude. When the Lord makes himself known by the *judgments* which he executes, we see him advancing, to use the ideas and the language of men, with slow and reluctant steps. When misery is to be relieved, benefits conferred, or sins forgiven, the blessing outruns expectation, nay, even desire. But, when the wicked are to be punished, justice seems to regret the necessity under which it is laid, to maintain itself, and the fin-

ner is not destroyed till, to his own conviction, his condemnation is acquitted of unrighteousness, and till every thing around him calls for vengeance.

The wickedness of the old world was so great, that GOD is said to have “repented that he had made man.” Nevertheless after God had threatened to destroy the human race with a deluge, a reprieve of many years is granted, to afford space and means for averting the calamity by repentance. Abraham was permitted, nay encouraged, to intercede for the sinful, the devoted cities of the plain of Jordan; and the righteousness of so small a number as *five* persons would have saved the whole people of those regions. The nations of Canaan were not expelled, to make way for Israel, till the measure of their iniquity was full; and the haughty spirit of Pharaoh was not brought low, by wonder upon wonder, by plague upon plague, till he had hardened his heart against the power of God, and the sufferings of men, and thereby made himself a “vessel of wrath fitted for destruction.”

The awful scene which we are this night to contemplate, is, in more respects than one, singular and unexampled. We are not only presented with a series of miracles, a demonstration of the tremendous power of Almighty GOD, but, what is still more extraordinary, they are a series of miracles, all marked with uncommon rigour and severity. The wise and righteous Governor of the world seems, in this instance, to have deviated from the usual lenity of his proceeding; as if determined to make men tremble before him, and to stand in awe of his power and justice, as well as to hope in his mercy.

Moses and Aaron, though their former embassy to Pharaoh had met with a reception so mortifying to themselves, and so fatal to their afflicted brethren, are obliged and encouraged at God’s command to undertake a second. And the haughty tyrant having dared to reject the first, as delivered in the name of an unknown God, they are now furnished with credentials which

which carried their own authority on their foreheads, and which were calculated to convince every thing but rooted infidelity, of the divine power by which they were issued. First, they make reason speak. And had Pharaoh been wise, no other monitor had been necessary. But a deaf ear being turned to that meek and heavenly charmer, it becomes needful to employ a stronger and more forcible language. Being again introduced, they again deliver their message, and are again treated with scorn. Aaron, as he was commanded, having the rod of God in his hand, casts it upon the ground before Pharaoh and his court, and lo! it instantly becomes animated ; it is converted into a serpent, armed with deadly poison. When Moses first beheld this strange sight, he “ was afraid, and would have fled :” but Pharaoh appears not in the least alarmed. The same fire melts wax, and hardens clay ; the same doctrine is the favour of life unto life in them that believe, and of death unto death in them that perish.

Some interpreters have alleged, that this transformation was not only miraculous, but emblematical, and that it was intended to humble this tyrannical and sanguinary prince, by exhibiting a representation of his own character, and of his subfervency to the power of that God whom he had presumed to defy. What a sudden and striking change, through the permission of Providence, takes place ! A harmless rod or shepherd’s crook, the emblem of mild, wise and good government, is changed into a poisonous snake, the emblem of cruelty and oppression. And lo, at the divine pleasure, the poison is again extracted, the deadly tooth is plucked out, and the fiery serpent becomes a harmless rod again. And thus, in general, afflictive providences are either the gentle rod of a wise father to admonish, to correct and to reform ; or the keen two-edged sword of an adversary, to cleave asunder, to devour and to destroy. Whether this were intended or not, it is evident Pharaoh understood it not, or disregarded

it. And, as infidelity is always desirous of fortifying itself by something that has the semblance of reason: and, while it pretends to doubt of every thing, is, in truth, the most simple and credulous principle in the world, Pharaoh affects to treat the miracle which was wrought by Moses and Aaron, as a mere trick, a feat of necromancy or magic. He calls for such of his own people as professed these arts, to confront them with the Israelitish ambassadors; in order to oppose skill to skill, and to diminish the respect and attention claimed by Moses and Aaron, to their mission, and to their God, by shewing similar, or equal signs, performed by Jannes and Jambres, the votaries of an Egyptian deity.

The magicians confidently undertake the task, and, through the permission of Heaven, partly succeed. Their rods cast upon the ground, likewise become serpents. The heart of Pharaoh exults, and the magicians of Egypt laugh the Jewish shepherds to scorn. But the triumph of unbelief is only for a moment. Aaron's rod, in its serpent state, swallowed up their rods. Reasoning man will ask, why were not impiety and infidelity checked in their very first attempt? Why were the demons of Egypt left in possession of the slightest vestige of power, to oppose or to imitate the mighty power of God? Why grant to Pharaoh and to his magicians, even the momentary triumph of their incantations? The reason is obvious. Had the Egyptian enchantments been attended with no success, and produced no effect, infidelity would have had its plea at hand. "Your pretended miracle is mere illusion, it is an attempt to mislead our understanding, by imposing upon our senses. Though we cannot produce this particular effect, or perform this particular trick, by our art, we can effect wonders equally or much more astonishing." But, by being permitted to succeed in their first effort, and to rival Moses and Aaron so far in power and reputation, they are insensibly drawn in to give their sanction to the sign performed

formed by the Hebrews, for the sake of their own credit ; and no sooner is it stamped for currency, with their image and superscription, than they and their abettors are confounded, by seeing the wretched impression of their art effaced, absorbed, annihilated ; and no image remains visible, but that of the living and true God. The Power which swallowed up the magicians' rods, could as easily have prevented the transmutation ; but the confutation is much more complete by the one, than it would have been by the other. Impiety has shut her own mouth, and infidelity stands stripped of her last and only plea.

An opportunity is here presented of instituting an inquiry, which has greatly employed and violently divided the learned and ingenious ; namely, whether the supernatural effects, here and elsewhere in scripture ascribed to the agency of demons and malignant spirits, through the practice of magical arts, were real miracles, that is, alterations of the known and established laws of nature, by the permission of GOD ; or only dexterous impositions, practised by subtle artists, on the simple and credulous, giving the appearance of reality to what had no existence ? We shall not take upon us to determine, whether of these two opinions is most conformable to reason, and to the analogy of faith. But the opportunity having offered, we shall take the liberty of suggesting some considerations, tending less to settle the question, than to shew that, perhaps, it is not capable of a solution. But our grand aim shall be to shew, that, which ever side men are pleased to take, the miracles wrought in support of truth, through the agency of the Author of all good, preserve all their superiority, and the truth itself shines in all its lustre.

And, first, if we try the cause by the *letter* of the narration of Moses, it will immediately strike every reader, that these extraordinary feats were actually produced by the power of the devil. The history relates the change that passed on the magicians' rods, in

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the self-same terms which describe the transmutation of Aaron's ; and the name given to these execrable men, is the same that belongs to persons who have devoted themselves to the wicked one. On the other hand, we know, that scripture, in describing natural objects, usually accommodates itself to the prevailing notions of the ages and nations in which the inspired authors lived and wrote ; that it condescends even to adopt the language, the ideas, and the prejudices of the vulgar ; and, that it employs, not the accurate language and just ideas of philosophy, but those of common life, in treating the greatest and most important subjects. We thence conclude, that whether the enchantments of the magicians produced real miracles, or were deceptions merely, the Spirit of God would certainly have narrated the fact in the self-same terms. From the letter of the sacred history, therefore, we can draw no conclusive argument for either side of the question.

We shall have equal reason to suspend our judgment, if we try, secondly, to decide it by the relations transmitted to us, from various ages and regions of the world, concerning real or seeming enchantments. It would, perhaps, be as difficult to persuade the men of our own age, that such a thing as witchcraft ever existed, as it would have been, to convince our ancestors in some former ages, that most of the effects ascribed to Satan and his agents, had no foundation but in the cunning, dexterity and knavery of one part of mankind, practising on the ignorance, credulity and simplicity of another. But, as it would betray a silly and ridiculous easiness of belief, on the one hand, to admit as true, the ten thousand stories, which the times of ignorance devised, related and believed ; and with which our own childhood may have been scared and alarmed ; so, it would certainly be an unreasonable and absurd degree of scepticism, on the other, to reject as fabulous every relation of this sort, however well authenticated. Wise and good men have provided,

ed, by arguments amounting almost to demonstration, the absurdity of admitting the actual interference of a diabolical power in order to deceive mankind. And wise and good men, by evidence apparently as clear and satisfactory, have endeavoured to establish the certainty of such interference in particular instances. And this seems a good reason against pronouncing hastily upon the nature of the sorceries practised by the magicians of Egypt.

We shall find ourselves equally in the dark, if we attempt to form our judgment, in the third place, on metaphysical notions. Our minds are exceedingly limited with respect to all objects, and particularly with respect to the nature of spirits. We know, from experience, that the soul, little as it comprehends its own nature and essence, has a wonderful influence over every particle of that body to which it is united: but we can form no notion of the power and influence, which spirits of a different order may possess over larger portions of matter, and even over our bodies, and, of consequence, over our minds. Much less are we able to conceive what an extent of power the Father of spirits may, for wise purposes, have permitted to evil spirits, over the whole world of nature, which has fallen into disorder, and is labouring under the curse of Heaven, on account of man's apostacy. The limited nature of human understanding, therefore, likewise forbids us to decide too peremptorily on a subject so obviously involved in difficulty.

Finally, the principles of religion here refuse to lend us their aid. In whatever tends to convey saving light to the soul, or peace to the conscience; in all that relates to the government of the heart, or the wise conduct of the life, religion is ever at hand, and kindly offers her aid, nay, presses it upon us; but, in questions of doubtful disputation, in which men rather aim at gratifying a restless curiosity, or wild imagination, than at improving the understanding, or mending the heart, revelation rather checks and represses inquiry,

inquiry, than promises or lends her assistance. It is sufficient then, for our purpose, to say, that of whatever nature were the incantations of the Egyptian magicians, and whatever their effects, the God of truth, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, put his infinite superiority beyond a possibility of doubt ; and extorted an acknowledgment of it from the mouths of the magicians themselves. But, though they are put to silence, and Pharaoh is confounded, by the miracle of Aaron's rod swallowing up their rods, yet they are not brought to see the insufficiency of their art, neither is he yet reduced to yield obedience to an authority asserted by so high a hand. A miracle, therefore, which only threatened, but continued harmless ; a miracle which proved fatal only to the instruments of sorcery and enchantment, failing to produce compliance, it becomes at length necessary to follow up the remonstrances of reason and humanity, and the evidence of signs, powerful indeed, yet innocent, by the operation of signs that shall be felt : signs, which shall address themselves to the understanding, and the senses, at once ; and shall force conviction upon the most careless and incredulous.

Their river, the Nile, was the chief ground of glorifying to the Egyptians. It was the ornament of their country, and the source of its fertility. Deriving the moisture, necessary to fructification, from thence, they vainly boasted that they were independent of the heavens ; standing in no need, like the rest of the world, of the refreshing drops which fall from thence. Egypt, therefore, is first smitten, in the darling source of its pride ; and that which presumptuously put itself in the place of God, first feels the power of God ; and becomes, not a cause of vainglorious boasting, but a loathing and an abomination to its worshippers. Smitten with the awful rod, its waters are instantly and universally turned into blood. Horrid change ! An inundation of the river too scanty, threatened a famine : an inundation too copious,

copious, threatened a deluge. . But, O dreadful reflection! the river no longer flows with that precious refreshing fluid, which gives drink and renewed vigour to thirsty man, to thirsty cattle, to the parched ground ; but a fluid which taints the air ; which excites abhorrence, instead of satisfying the appetite ; and which kills what it contains, instead of communicating life and fruitfulness wherever it is diffused. And should it rise and swell, what is it ? An abominable deluge of blood. Its streams had been often stained with the blood of Hebrew innocents ; and its savage master is now punished with seeing its vast channel filled, from shore to shore, with one crimson tide. In this awful glass we are made to see, that whatsoever men exalt into the room of God, and worship as God, will sooner or later become a loathing or a curse to them ; and that the instrument of their sin assuredly will be converted, at length, into the instrument of their punishment.

“ And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments.” Foolish, unhappy men ; to try to increase an evil which was already intolerable ! If their art could have done any thing, it had been more wisely employed in endeavouring to purify and sweeten those polluted streams. To succeed in multiplying blood was ruinous. The greater the power of their art, the more pernicious it was to themselves and to their country. And this is the whole extent of the boasted power of Satan : it is a power to do evil, a power to destroy : but a power destitute both of capacity and of inclination to do good. Whereas that of Heaven, though it be an ability to do evil, is an ability to this effect, which it exercises rarely, and with reluctance ; whereas the doing of good, and the diffusing of happiness, is its habitual object, and its constant employment. Vain man would be independent, and sometimes boasts that he is so ; and yet, what is he ? A creature sustained by bread, and refreshed by water ; he lives by respiration the air which he

he sucks in ; he depends, every instant of his existence, on the aid of every element. Let the quantity or the qualities of any one of them be ever so little changed, and that moment he becomes miserable. One rainy or droughty season makes whole nations to languish ; the frost of a night destroys the hope of a year ; and a single blast of wind sends mighty navies to the bottom. There is no need of a miracle to plague those whom God means to punish. All nature is at war with his adversaries : the stars, in their courses, fight against those who fight with God. O may we never be so mad as to provoke that Power by which we are continually supported, and from which we cannot flee !

After a chastisement so awful, who could have imagined that Pharaoh was able still to stand out ? But the human heart exhibits a mystery of iniquity, which nothing but multiplied experience could render credible. The next summons has a threatening annexed it ; and the moment of refusal is to be the moment of execution. The plague threatened, being particularly specified beforehand, was likely to excite the greater alarm, and thereby to drive the offender to the means of prevention : but, it would appear, Pharaoh despised it. What, terrified at a swarm of frogs ! vermin, loathsome indeed, but despicably harmless. How ignorantly do men estimate the judgments of God, when they consider only the instrument which he employs. Men effect little with large and abundant means ; God performs wonders with things mean and contemptible. Is a haughty tyrant to be subdued ? There is no need of more than twelve legions of angels ; an army of frogs, in the hand of God, is sufficient for the purpose. Again the magicians are weak enough to assist the plague ; at least, they affect to lend their aid ; and rather than not be thought mighty, will seek to themselves a name by doing mischief. Again the river, which ministered so much to their pride, is made the minister of avenging Heaven

Heaven to punish them. As its waters were lately all blood, to poison the fishes which it contained, and to taint the air, so now they are all putrefaction, to give dreadful life to an innumerable race of odious vermin, for humbling the proud. Every creature is, and does, just that which GOD would have it to be, and to do—it becomes either a blessing, or a curse, at his command ! And, were we wise enough, to assist our weak, or to correct our erroneous vision, by the optics of the sanctuary, we should behold, under many a fair and flattering form, much loathsome ness and deformity.

Pharaoh despised this plague, while it was only threatened, but feels it to be no slight one, when it falls upon him : and he is, in this respect, the image of many a thoughtless sinner, who trifle with the judgments denounced in the word of God, till bitter experience teaches them, that every arrow from the quiver of the Almighty is both penetrating and poisonous. The proud heart which refused to bend, at length begins to break ; and a slow, lingering, partial, reluctant consent is given to the demand of Heaven ; and permission is granted to the people, to go, " that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord." The concession, slight as it is, procures a respite. Mercy, ever on the wing, flies to succour the miserable.

We have seen Moses and Aaron executing the judgments of avenging Heaven, by the agency of a rod. Christ himself is the powerful word, by which GOD made and sustains worlds ; the all-potent instrument to save, and to destroy. " With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth ; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Moses acted by a delegated power : Jesus has all power in himself. " Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant : but Christ as a son over his own house." The same Moses was the deliverer of Israel, and the scourge of Egypt :

Egypt: the same Jesus, who is the author of eternal salvation to them that believe, " shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire: taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." " All judgment is committed to the Son." " He shall reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." " The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

" O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

History of Moses.

LECTURE VI.

EXODUS X. 7.

And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet, that Egypt is destroyed?

HOW very different an appearance do objects wear, according as they are beautified and exalted by the favour of Heaven, or blasted and disfigured by the curse of an offended God! Eden, before man's apostacy; Eden, fresh planted, by the sovereign hand of the Creator, contained every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, and in the midst of it was the tree of life; but, O sad reverse, the fatal effect of transgression! “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;” and the tree of life is removed to happier regions, or guarded from guilty man's approach, by the flaming swords of the cherubim. The plain of Jordan, well-watered every where, and beautiful as the garden of the Lord, delighted the eyes, and allured the heart of Lot, when he separated himself from his uncle Abraham. But O how awfully changed that once delicious spot! The day when Lot went out of it, “Abraham looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoak of the country went up, as the smoak of a furnace.” What a charming prospect did Egypt present in the days

days of her glory ? Her fertile surface, covered with the silver flux of her stately, overflowing river, except where thousands of populous cities lifted up their proud heads to the skies ; or, when the river retreated, her golden, luxuriant harvests waving with the fragrant wind. How changed the scene, when the Nile ran, not water, but blood ; after the murrain had destroyed all their cattle ; after the lightning and the hail had blasted every tree, had devoured every herb, and the “ locusts had consumed what the hail had left !” What makes earth resemble heaven ; and men like angels ? The presence, the blessing, and the image of **GOD** ! What once covered the earth with water, and shall at length destroy it by fire ? What sinks men to the level of diabolical, damned spirits, and adds tenfold horror to gloomy hell ? The wrath of the Almighty, and the deprivation of his glorious similitude. Nature sinks under the description and the denunciation of the divine displeasure. What must it be to endure its dreadful effects, without intermission, and without end !

Instead of going into a particular detail of the subsequent plagues wherewith **GOD** afflicted Egypt, we shall suggest a few historical and practical remarks upon the subject in general, serving to unfold the windings and the workings of the human heart, to illustrate and vindicate the ways of Providence, to expose the madness of striving against **GOD**, and to display the wisdom, the safety and the happiness of submitting readily, cheerfully and universally to the divine authority.

And, first. We observe, that as **GOD** has many inconceivable methods of doing good to men ; so his power of punishing is unlimited, and the treasures of his wrath are far beyond what fear itself, which magnifies every object, can fancy. Of his glorious capacity and disposition to bless mankind, who has not enjoyed the sweetest, and frequently repeated experience ? Whose life is so short, as not to contain a history

tory of benefits, a display of mercy, a profusion of loving-kindness, which astonish while they delight? Whose portion of felicity is so scanty, as not to exhibit wonders of goodness infinitely above the desert of angels? What understanding is so brutish, what heart so ungrateful, as not to recur, at the first call, to a multitude of special blessings, pressing upon the memory, urging prior or superior claims of acknowledgement and praise? Need you to be told, ungrateful, forgetful children of men! Need you to be told, the value of an uninterrupted and steady course of good health; or of the more sensible benefit of recovery from sickness and pain? Shall I send you back to years that are long past, or recall yesterday to your recollection? Shall I remind you of that common bounty which gives you, day by day, your daily bread; or of that singular, shall I say miraculous, interposition, which seemed to drop down manna around your tabernacle? Must all ages, and nations, and regions of the world, be made to pass in review before your eyes; or will you confine your observation to your own moment of existence, your own hand-breadth of space, your own two or three acquaintances and contemporaries, your own pittance of knowledge? Shall the glories of nature, or the wonders of Providence, be unfolded to your view? Will you contemplate the fatness and fragrancy of the fertile earth, or the vastness and brilliancy of the azure vault of heaven? Will you confine yourselves to things seen and temporal; or, borne as on the eagle's wing, contemplate things which are unseen and eternal? Will you converse with your fellow-mortals on the surface of this mole-hill, or join in the songs and raptures of angels, who surround the throne, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, immortal intelligences, perfectly awake to the full perception of their blessedness? Choose you to dwell on the transitory comforts of the life that now is, or to anticipate the joys substantial, sincere and lasting, of that which is to come? Creation

tion spreads her fair, her ample, her splendid page to the delighted eye. The mysterious volume, sealed to the careless reader as with seven seals, to the serious and attentive soul unveils the hidden wisdom of GOD, and, written with a sun-beam, there stands recorded the gracious purpose of Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Wouldst thou be satisfied, O man, that the great GOD has means innumerable, unutterable, incomprehensible, of conferring happiness on mankind? Think, O think, how he has loved the world, in the redemption of it by CHRIST JESUS! Think how *many* demonstrations of grace meet in that *one*, “God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all!” And when you have ruminated, and ruminated, on the history of redeeming love; when you have recovered from the astonishment and joy of contemplating what GOD *has done* for you, lose yourself afresh in the prospect of what the LORD hath *laid up* for the heirs of salvation—in the prospect of that great, exceeding and “eternal weight of glory,” “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it hath not entered into the heart of man” to form any adequate conception or idea! Fly, O my soul, whithersoever thou wilt; settle wherever thou wilt, infinite goodness still supports thy flight, and settle thou must on the rock of ages, at last.

But, ah! my friend, this GOD, almighty to save, is also mighty to destroy. As his bounty is an inexhausted source of plenty to bless his friends, so his justice is a capacious quiver, stored with innumerable poisoned arrows, to shed the blood, to drink up the spirits of his adversaries. Think, in how many parts art thou vulnerable? In every particle of thy frame, in every faculty of thy soul. Every sense opens a passage for the entrance of an avenging GOD. The understanding, at his command, expands to the dreadful perception of justice that will not bend; of severity that knows not to relax; of vengeance that admits not

not of pity. Memory, roused by that trumpet which awakes the dead, gives new form and substance to the hideous spectres of transgressions long since departed, and which were vainly imagined to be laid in the grave forever; and the guilty wretch is dragged to the bitter recollection of what he once dwelt on with unhallowed delight, and now would fain bury in eternal oblivion; or which he gladly would, at the price of worlds, redeem from the history of his wretched life. As memory, to fulfil the righteous judgment of GOD, can readily summon up all that is past, in order to awaken remorse, and inspire terror; so fear launches forth into the boundless, endless regions of futurity, and rouses despair; and in the very abysses of burning hell, shudders at the thought of a deeper gulph, and of a hotter flame. Read, O sinner, the history of the plagues of Egypt, and tremble! Suppose, for a moment, the cup wherewith thou art ready to quench thy burning thirst, instantly turned into blood, to the loathing of thy soul and thy flesh. Suppose thy body struck with an universal leprosy, or the dust under thy feet quickened into abominable vermin; the air around thy head impregnated with swarms of noisome insects; thy fun extinguished for three tedious lingering days, and the thunder of an angry God rolling over thy guilty devoted habitation; and suppose all this to be but the beginning of sorrow; the mere threatenings of wrath to come; woe that may be endured, torment that may expire: for ah! from yonder fearful pit arises the smoak of a fire that shall not be quenched; smoak that shall ascend forever and ever. I hear groans bursting from the bosom of despair; and the rattling of everlasting, adamantine chains. Behold the wild looks, the agonizing pangs of that poor rich man, when, from the flames of his torment, he beholds Lazarus in Abraham's bosom: when he beholds heaven removed to an inaccessible distance; heaven disjoined by an unpassable gulph. Heaven, the rest of the weary, and

the reward of the faithful, affords to him a momentary glimpse of its joys, only to embitter remorse, only to pierce the soul with keener pangs, and to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was before. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

After serious reflection upon these things, our second observation would seem ill-founded, and destitute of all probability and truth, did not all history, and daily experience confirm the woeful certainty of it. It is this: that by frequent indulgence, and inveterate habits of sin, the heart may at length become quite callous; may be rendered equally insensible to the calls of mercy, and the alarms of justice. We are struck with astonishment, at the sight of a poor, infatuated wretch like Pharaoh, repeatedly braving that power which returned to crush and humble him, and slighting that grace which as often relented and afforded space and means for repentance. Would to God there were room to think the representation more unnatural than it is, and that the character of Pharaoh were a rarity in the world. But alas! what is the life of most men, but an habitual fighting against God? Upon whom falls the weight of our remark? Upon a few thoughtless, hardened wretches only, who have found out the secret of lulling conscience to rest; who, having conquered the sense of fear and of shame, commit iniquity with greediness; who “hide not their sin, like Sodom, but publish it like Gomorrah?” Let us not deceive ourselves, but watch over our own hearts, and “exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” There stands Pharaoh, the daring, the presumptuous sinner; whom goodness could not mollify nor judgments subdue; and let him who is without sin cast the first stone at him. Who can flatter himself with the thought, that the errors of his life were the mere inadvertencies of haste and inattention? Who can say of himself, “This fault I corrected, as soon

soon as I discovered it? Having been once made sensible of the danger and wickedness of that sinful course, I instantly forsook it, and have returned to it no more. Smarting from the effects of my folly, I have never again dared to provoke the lash of my Father's chastening rod. The resolutions which I made in the day of sickness, and sorrow, and calamity, I have faithfully remembered, and diligently kept. Vows made at the Lord's table, I have made conscience to perform. The threatenings of God's word I have not disregarded; the long-suffering of my God I have not abused." Alas! alas! the reverse of all this is the truth which condemns every one. Not a single, but repeated acts of intemperance, injustice, impurity, impiety; not casual and undesigned expressions, but deliberate and indulged habits of falsehood, malevolence, selfishness and uncharitableness, place *us* as criminals at the bar, by the side of Pharaoh, and forbid us to condemn him, because we also have sinned. What avails it me to say, that my offence is not the same with his? Perhaps I had neither power, nor inclination, nor opportunity, for committing that man's transgression. Have I therefore washed my hands in innocence? Can I therefore plead, "not guilty?" The great question is, Have I kept myself free from *mine own* transgression? And, spared of God to make the inquiry—let Pharaoh's impenitence, and Pharaoh's doom, awaken us to a sense of our danger; and urge a speedy flight from the wrath that is to come.

Thirdly, This history leads us to remark the great difference between the slow, reluctant, partial submission of fear, and the prompt, cheerful and unreserved compliance of a grateful and affectionate heart. Pharaoh, like a fullen, sturdy slave, will not move a step, till stimulated by a fresh application of the whip; the moment that the pain of the stripe ceases, he stands still, or turns back. The first summons is treated by him with insolence and scorn; and he resolves that Israel shall not have a single moment's relaxation from

their burthens. Brought to himself by a few strokes of the rod of God's anger, he yields a tardy consent to the intermission of their labours for a little while, and to their doing sacrifice to their God: but it must be "in the land where they dwelt, even in Egypt." That alternative being rejected, and a new demand made, backed with a new threatening, and followed with a new plague, he agrees to permit the *male* part of Israel, who were arrived at man's estate, to resort to the place appointed; but he is determined to detain their wives, children and cattle, as hostages for their return. Constrained, at length, by dint of judgments, to let the *whole* congregation depart, he endeavours to stipulate, that they should not go *very far* off; and not, till broken by the last dreadful plague, can he be brought to resign his usurped authority over the free-born sons of God.

We often find men pretending to make a merit of giving up what it is no longer in their power to retain. After a man has squandered away his means, in riot and extravagance, deserves he praise for living sparingly? Another has ruined his constitution by intemperance; is his forced continence an object of admiration? By no means. He has discontinued his debaucheries through disability, not from inclination and conviction of his error. Old age has debilitated a third! is he therefore virtuous? No, no: his vices have forsaken *him*, not he his *vices*. When a man serves through fear, he does no more than he needs must; but love is liberal and generous, and stands not questioning, "yea hath God said?" but, ever on the watch, ever on the wing, the moment that the voice of God is heard, it is ready to reply, "Here am I, Lord, send me." This leads me to remark,

Fourthly, The wisdom of giving up, at the command of God, with alacrity, what we must give up at last, whether we will or not. What a pitiful figure does Pharaoh make in the end! baffled in every attempt, driven out of every fortress, dishonoured in the eyes

eyes of his own servants, transmitted to latest posterity a monument of pride and impotence. Were not the proud man blind and infatuated, he would yield through self-love ; he would submit to preserve his own consequence, at least the appearance of it. Unhappily for us, our will stands but too often in opposition to the will of GOD. When they come to clash, who ought in reason to give way ? Who must of necessity submit ? Knowest thou not, O man, that to destroy thyself, thou needest but to follow thy own headstrong inclination : knowest thou not, that the gratification, not the disappointment of illicit desire, is ruinous ? But who ever made a sacrifice of inclination to duty, and had reason to repent of it ? Who knows not, that to yield submission is to obtain a triumph ? In a contention where there is a probability, or even a possibility of our prevailing, it may be worth while to risk a combat ; but who, except a madman, will seek to encounter a foe by whom he is sure to be defeated ? And yet, in that mad, that ruinous strife, see how many are engaged ? Behold the stars in their courses ranged on the part of their Creator ; behold all nature standing in arms to espouse his cause ; and who must be overcome ? Against whom is this formidable preparation made ? There stands the enemy, in all his weakness and folly ; a crawling worm on a dunghill, provoking his fate, tampering with eternal ruin, hardening himself against GOD, and yet thinking to prosper. The influence of no malignant star is necessary to blast him : there is a necessity for no earthquake to swallow him up : no archangel armed with a sword of fire, need descend to cut him asunder : his breath is in his own nostrils ; he is sinking into his dust ; his own ridiculous efforts are wasting and consuming him. Foolish creature and unwise ! why wilt thou contend longer ? “ Wherefore shouldst thou be stricken any more ? ” Constrain not HIM to be thy foe who has towards thee the disposition of the best of friends,

friends, and who is mighty to save, even “ to the uttermost, them that come unto him.”

Fifthly, In the course of these dreadful plagues, we observe, not only the pride of man effectually humbled, but the power of Satan trampled in the dust, under the feet of the Most High. It is highly interesting to observe, by what gradual steps the enemy and the avenger is laid low, till he is at length destroyed. Presumption, at first, induces him, in confidence of a permitted power, to enter the lists and to try his strength with God. Aaron’s rod is turned into a serpent. The magicians attempt the same, and succeed. Their rods also become serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods. By and by the water of the river is turned into blood, and the fishes die. The magicians, by their enchantments, madly assist the plague, and acquire a little transitory reputation, by doing mischief. Flushed with this farther success, they go on to imitate the miracles of Moses and Aaron; but, to their confusion, they fail there, where it seemed most probable that they should with greatest ease support their fame. That loathsome vermin, lice, is to be produced miraculously, which slovenliness and filth naturally produce without any effort. At the word of Moses, the dust of the land is transformed into this noisome, nauseous insect. But the whole power of hell cannot effect, at the time, and in the manner which it would, what time and carelessness alone, in the usual course of things, would certainly have produced; and they feel themselves attacked with a plague which their art could not bring upon others. Finally, after having become the subjects of a miraculous calamity which might be borne, they are at length attacked with one absolutely intolerable, which drives them from the competition: they give up their silly arts of sorcery, and attempt to rival the true God no more. And thus, when the mystery of godliness shall be finished, an astonished world shall behold the sleight and devices of Satan falling upon his

his own head, his momentary triumphs covering him with more accumulated disgrace, and his infernal malice and diabolical craft made ministering servants to the wisdom and goodness of God. A good reason, among many others, why we should judge nothing rashly before the time till the Lord cometh, who shall bring light out of obscurity, and fully vindicate his ways to men.

Sixthly, We observe how unlike the latter ends of things are to their beginnings. The world laughs at the idea of two feeble old men, issuing forth from a desert, the patrons of liberty; to force a mighty prince, and a powerful nation, to listen to the dictates of justice and humanity, and to liberate a million of wretched creatures, whose spirits were totally broken by their miseries and who seemed to have lost even the inclination of vindicating their own rights. Pharaoh despised them; the magicians defied them; Israel distrusted them; they themselves are ready to sink under the difficulty and danger of the enterprise. But, conducted of Heaven, they attempt, they proceed, they prosper, they overcome. They invade Egypt, two solitary, unsupported individuals! They leave it at the head of six hundred thousand men, fit to bear arms, with a corresponding number of females, besides old men and children, and a mixed multitude of non-descript persons; bidding defiance to the whole force of a wise, and populous, and warlike country. And we see them in the course of a few years taking forcible possession of one of the strongest, most impacticable and best defended countries in the world.

I need but hint to you the counterpart of this. Behold the unconnected son of a carpenter, at the head of twelve simple illiterate fishermen, attacking the religious establishments of the whole globe, and prevailing. Behold him, armed with a few plain facts, and a few doctrines as plain, overturning the whole fabric of heathen mythology and worship; ingrafting

ing on the stock of Moses, and the legal dispensation, a scion from a nobler root ; which has swallowed up the parent tree, has filled the earth with its branches, is feeding the nations to this day with its fruit, and is likely to maintain its place till all the gracious purposes of Heaven are accomplished. “ It is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” “ When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” The next Lecture will, by divine favour, exhibit the institution and celebration of the first passover, with the event which gave occasion to it. May God bless what has been spoken. To Him be glory and honour forever and ever.

History of Moses.

LECTURE VII.

EXODUS xii. 1—3.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months ; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.

IN the history of all nations, there are eras and events of peculiar importance, which extend their influence to future ages and generations, and are fondly commemorated by latest posterity. Hence, every day of the revolving year becomes, in its course, to one people or another, the anniversary of something memorable which befel their forefathers, and is remembered by their sons with triumph or with sorrow. Most of the religious observances which have obtained in the world, when traced up to their source, are found to originate in providential dispensations ; and history thereby becomes the best interpreter of customs and manners. It is a most amusing employment, to observe the operation and progress of the human mind in this respect ; and to consider how variously different men, and at different periods, have contrived to transmit to their children the memory of similar achievements, successes, or disasters. A great stone set up on end, a heap of stones, a mound of earth, and

and the like, were, in the earlier, ruder, simpler state of the world, the monuments of victory ; and to dance around them with songs, on an appointed day, was the rustic commemoration of their rude and simple posterity. The triumphs and the death of heroes came, in process of time, to be remembered with conviviality and mirth, or with plaintive strains and solemn dirges. The hoary bard varied and enlivened the feast, by adapting to his rough voice or rougher harp the uncouth rhymes which he himself had composed, in praise of departed gallantry and virtue. As arts were invented and improved, the wise, the brave and the good were preserved from oblivion by monuments more elegant, more intelligible, and more lasting. A more correct style of poetry, and a sweeter melody were cultivated. Sculpture and painting conveyed to children's children an exact representation of the limbs and lineaments of the venerable men who adorned, who instructed, who saved their country. And thus, though dead, they continued to live and act in the animated canvas, in the breathing brass, or the speaking marble. At length, the pen of the historian took up the cause of merit, and diffused over the whole globe, and handed down to the very end of time the knowledge of the persons and of the actions which should never die.

We are this evening to bestow our attention upon an institution altogether of divine appointment, intended to record an event of singular importance to the nation immediately affected by it, and which, according to its intention and in its consequences, has involved a great part of mankind.

Moses and Aaron having, as the instruments in the hand of Providence, chastised Egypt with nine successive and severe plagues, inflicted in the view of procuring Israel's release, are at length dismissed by the unrelenting tyrant, with a threatening of certain death, should they ever again presume to come into his presence. Moses takes him at his word, and bids him

him a solemn, a long, and everlasting farewell. When men have finally banished from them their advisers and monitors, and when God has ceased to be a re-prover to them, their destruction cannot be very distant. Better it is to have the law to alarm, to threaten and to chastise us, than to have it in anger altogether withdrawn. Better is a conscience that disturbs and vexes than a conscience laid fast asleep, than a conscience "feared as with a hot iron."

What solemn preparation is made for the tenth and last awful plague of Egypt! God is about to reckon with Pharaoh and his subjects, for the blood of the Israelitish male children, doomed from the womb to death, by his cruel edict. His eye pitied not nor spared the anguish of thousands of wretched mothers, bereaved of their children the instant they were born; and a righteous God pities, spares him not, in the day of visitation.

The circumstances attending this tremendous calamity are strikingly calculated to excite horror. First, God himself is the immediate author of it. Hitherto He had plagued Egypt by means and instruments; "Stretch out thy hand;" "Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thy hand with thy rod." But now it is, "I will go out into the midst of Egypt." "And it came to pass that at midnight the LORD smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle." As mercies coming immediately from the hand of our heavenly Father are sweeter and better than those which are communicated through the channel of the creature; so judgments, issuing directly from the stores of divine wrath, are more terrible and overwhelming. The sword of an invading foe is a dreadful thing, but infinitely more dreadful is the sword of a destroying angel, or the uplifted hand of God himself.

Secondly,

Secondly, The nature and quality of the calamity greatly increase the weight of it. It is a wound there, where the heart is most susceptible of pain ; an evil which undermines hope ; hope, our refuge and our remedy under other evils. The return of another favourable season, may repair the wastes and compensate the scarcity of that which preceded it. A body emaciated or ulcerated all over, may recover strength, and be restored to soundness ; and there is hope that the light of the sun may return, even after a thick darkness of three days. But what kindness of nature, what happy concurrence of circumstances, can re-animate the breathless clay, can restore an only son, a first born, stricken with death ?

The universality of this destruction is a third horrid aggravation of its woe. It fell with equal severity on all ranks and conditions ; on the prince and the peasant ; on the master and the slave. From every house the voice of misery bursts forth. No one is so much at leisure from his own distresses as to pity, soothe or relieve that of his wretched neighbour.

Fourthly, The blow was struck at the awful midnight hour, when every object assumes a more fable hue ; when fear, aided by darkness, magnifies to a gigantic size, and clothes in a more hideous shape the real and fantastical, the seen and the unseen disturbers of silence and repose. To be prematurely awakened out of sleep by the dying groans of a friend suddenly smitten, to be presented with the ghastly image of death in a darling object lately seen and enjoyed in perfect health, to be forced to the acknowledgment of the great and holy Lord God, by such an awful demonstration of his presence and power ! what terror and astonishment could equal this ?

The keen reflection that all this accumulated distress might have been prevented, was another cruel ingredient in the embittered cup. How would they now accuse their desperate madness, in provoking a power, which had so often and so forcibly warned them

them of their danger? If Pharaoh were not past feeling, how dreadful must have been the pangs which he felt, while he reflected, that after attempting to destroy a hapless, helpless race of strangers, who lay at his mercy, by the most unheard-of cruelty and oppression, he had now ruined his own country, by an obstinate perseverance in folly and impiety; that he had become the curse and the punishment of a nation, of which he was bound by his office to be the father and protector; and that his own hopes were now blasted in their fairest, most flattering object, the heir of his throne and empire, because he regarded not the rights of humanity and mercy in the treatment of his vassals.

Finally, If their anguish admitted of a still higher aggravation, the distinction from first to last made between them and Israel, the blessed exemption which the oppressed Hebrews had enjoyed from all these calamities, especially from this last death, must have been peculiarly mortifying and afflictive. “ But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the **LORD** doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” This partakes of the nature of that misery which the damned endure; who are represented as having occasional, distant and transitory glimpses of the blessedness of heaven, only for their punishment, only to heighten the pangs of their own torments. Of the approach of their other woes, these unhappy persons had been repeatedly warned. But this, it would appear, came upon them suddenly and in a moment. They had gone to rest in security. The short respite which they enjoyed from suffering had stilled their apprehension; “ surely,” said they, “ the bitterness of death is past.” But ah! it is only the deceitful calm which precedes the hurricane or the earthquake. Let men never dream of repose from the righteous judgment of God, whatever they may have already endured, till they have forsaken

forsaken their sins, and fled for refuge in the divine mercy.

It is now worth while to consider the notice given to God's own people of this approaching evil, and the means which were appointed and employed to secure them from being involved in the general ruin. The event so destructive to Egypt, was intended to be the era of their liberty, and the means of their deliverance. They had hitherto reckoned the beginning of their year from the month Tisri, which answers to our September ; which, as they supposed, was the time when the creation was begun and completed ; but they are now positively enjoined to begin to reckon from the month Abib or Nisan, that is March, in memory of a new creation ; whereby their condition was totally changed, from servitude of the most abject kind, into freedom the most exalted and perfect, even the glorious liberty of the sons of God. They are distinctly informed of the stroke which Providence was meditating against Egypt, and of the precise time when the blow was to be struck. They are accordingly directed to two things : First, to provide for their own safety ; and, Secondly, to hold themselves in perfect readiness to take advantage of the permission to depart, which the panic occasioned by the death of the first-born should extort from Pharaoh. For the former of these purposes, every particular family, or the two adjoining, in proportion to their number, the lowest, according to the Jewish writers, being not under ten, nor the highest above twenty, were commanded to choose out, and to set apart, every household, a male lamb, or kid, of a particular description, on the tenth day of the month, and to kill it on the evening of the fourteenth. The flesh of the victim was commanded to be eaten by every several household apart, roasted with fire. They were all enjoined carefully to keep within their houses. And the blood of the sacrifice was to be taken and sprinkled on the two side-posts, and the upper door-post

post of every house where it was eaten. This sprinkling of the blood was to be the token of God's covenant, and a protection to the families so distinguished, from the sword of the avenging angel.

But, a positive institution so immediately from heaven, an institution so full of meaning and instruction, of such celebrity in the history of the world, and connected so closely with an ordinance of still greater notoriety, and of much more extensive influence, an ordinance of much longer duration, and which commemorates an event of infinitely greater importance, surely demands the most minute attention, and the most serious inquiry. We pretend not to comprehend, and therefore undertake not to explain every particular circumstance of this solemn, divine institution: but the moral and religious design is, in general, so obvious, that a reader of ordinary capacity has but to run over it with a common degree of seriousness and attention, in order to understand what the Spirit of God is saying in it, for the edification of mankind.

And first, GOD was about to distinguish Israel by special marks of his favour. In order to this, they must carefully distinguish themselves by a punctual observance of his command. Is more expected of an Israelite than of an Egyptian? Undoubtedly. The blessings which come down from above, from the Father of lights, are not mere arbitrary and capricious effusions of liberality, falling upon one spot, and passing by another, without reason or design. No, they are the wise and gracious recompence of an intelligent, observing and discriminating Parent, to faithful, affectionate and obedient children. Israel had been forewarned of the ensuing danger to no purpose, had one iota or tittle relating to the ordinance of the paschal lamb been neglected. Calamity is to be avoided, not by foreknowing that it draws nigh, but by running to a place of safety. Salvation by Christ consists, not merely in head-knowledge of his person, doctrine and work; but in a cordial receiving and resting upon him.

him alone for salvation, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel, for “ wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” The careful selection, then, of a proper victim, and the exact application of it, according to the commandment, have a plain and an instructive meaning.

Secondly, As Israel was to depart in haste, the Spirit of God was pleased to enjoin a memorial of that haste, in the quality of the bread which they were to use, during the celebration of this festival. When liberty, dear liberty is in view, who so silly as to care whether the taste be gratified or not, for a few days, with a less palatable kind of food? Our most perfect enjoyments in this world, and our highest attainments, have a mixture of bitterness or of insipidity attending them: like the flesh of lambs eaten with bitter herbs, and unfermented bread. The Jews, we know, were singularly diligent and curious, in searching out and removing from their houses every thing leavened, during this sacred season. With superstitious scrupulousness, they prepared unleavened bread for themselves, and the poor, for months before the solemn day arrived. A few days previous to the feast they cleansed all their vessels and furniture. What could stand the fire, they purified with fire; what could not, they dipped in or rinsed with water. Their marble mortars they had hallowed anew. The night preceding the day of unleavened bread, they lighted wax tapers, and prepared for a general search after every remainder of leaven. The master of the family began the ceremony with this solemn address to God; “ Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast commanded us to put away all that is leavened out of our houses.” All the males of the household; master, children, domestics, assisted in searching the whole house over, and examined into the most secret corners, lest peradventure some lurking particle of leavened bread, or fermented dough, might have been overlooked, in order to its being destroyed. As if this had

had not been sufficient, that the family might be purged of at least all intentional violation of the commandment, the father of it concluded the search with this solemn execration : “ Let all the leaven that is in my house, and which I have not been able to find out or to remove, be scattered, and become like the smallest dust of the earth.” An inspired apostle is our interpreter of this part of the paschal observance ; so that we can be at no loss about the meaning of the Spirit in its institution. • “ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven ; neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* The scrupulous exactness of the Jews, in their literal obedience to the commandment, is a severe and just reproof of many, too many professing christians, who rush to the celebration of the gospel passover with little preparation or seriousness ; and some, alas ! deliberately hoarding up in their hearts, and secretly, greedily feeding upon “ the old leaven of malice and wickedness.”

Thirdly, the victim itself claims our most serious attention. “ A male lamb, of the first year,” — “ without blemish,” to be taken, on the tenth day of the month, from his dam, kept apart for four days, and then killed ! These are all tender and touching considerations. “ A lamb :” The most innocent and gentle of animals ; in the idea and the language of all ages and nations, another name for gentleness, harmlessness and simplicity ; removed early from its only comfort and protection, its fond mother’s side ; deprived of liberty, and destined to bleed by the sacrificing knife. Who can think of his plaintive bleatings, during the days of separation, without being melted ? What Israelitish heart so insensible, as not to yearn at the thought, that his own life, and the com-

fort of his family, were to be preserved, at the expense of the life of that inoffensive little creature, whom he had shut up for the slaughter, and which, in unsuspicuous confidence, licked the hand lifted up to shed its blood?

We have not long to search for the spirit and substance of this part of the institution: for all scripture presses upon our notice, “the LAMB OF GOD, who taketh away the sin of the world;” slain, “in the eternal purpose, from and before the foundation of the world; holy, harmless, and undefiled;” “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”—suffering “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” “Who was wounded for *our* transgressions, who was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed:” the Lord laying on him “the iniquity of us all;” withdrawn, separated from the bosom of his Father—delivered into the hands of men—pouring out his soul unto death.

It was to be “a lamb of *the first year*,” eight days old at the least; a year at the most. Not less than eight days, say the Jews, that there might intervene one sabbath from the birth of the victim; and that so the sacredness of this holy festival might render it worthy of being offered unto GOD. More probably, because that, till then, the animal was considered as too near a state of imperfection or impurity. It was not to exceed one year; because to that age it retains its lamb-like harmlessness and simplicity. Superstition, which is ever sinking the spirit in the letter, has asserted, that a single hour beyond the year vitiated the victim, and rendered it profane.

But the figure, without straining for a resemblance, presents unto us JESUS, “a Son born, and a Saviour given:” ours from the manger, ours to the tomb. His days cut off in the midst; at that period of life when men are coming to their prime of vigour, beauty

ty and usefulness. “A lamb without blemish.” Those who love to fritter away the spirit and meaning of divine institutions in literal interpretation, have gone into a particular enumeration of the various kinds of blemishes which disqualified a sacrifice upon this occasion ; and these they have multiplied to considerably above fifty. And what folly has taken pains to invent, superstition has been idle and weak enough to follow. The later Rabbins tell us, that the lamb was set apart four days before the sacrifice, in order to afford leisure and opportunity to inquire into its soundness and perfection ; that if any unobserved spot should appear, there might be time to reject it, and to substitute another in its room. The law itself is plain and simple ; and no good Israelite, of common sense, with the sacred charter in his hand, could possibly mistake its meaning ; which is simply to signify, that the good God is to be served with the choicest and best of every thing. But the law evidently looked further than to the mere corporal perfection or defects of a silly lamb : and we should but ill understand both the text and the commentary, did we not look through the whole type to HIM who is “without spot and blemish ;” who, though born of a sinful mother, “did no sin ;” who lived many years in the “midst of a sinful and adulterous generation,” without contracting any taint of moral pollution ; in whom “the prince of this world, when he came, found nothing ;” and whom his agents, Judas and Pontius Pilate, the instruments of his condemnation and death, were constrained to acquit. “I have sinned, and betrayed innocent blood ;” said the one. “Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him,” said the other. “And when the centurion saw what was done he said, Surely this was the Son of God !”

The very act of *selecting* the one victim from among many, must have been an affecting office. Why should this innocent creature bleed and die,

rather than another? Why should the notice of my eye, or his accidentally presenting himself first of the flock, or his superior beauty and strength, or the determination of the lot, doom him, in preference, to the slaughter? But one *must* die. Here the choice is fixed; and pity must not spare what Heaven has demanded. These emotions of compassion must have been frequently excited during the four days of separation. The plaintive bleating, issuing from a tender, aching heart, robbed at once of its natural food, protection and comfort; feeling the bitterness of death in the deprivation of maternal care and tenderness; the mournfully pleasing employment of supplying the devoted victim with aliment, up to the appointed hour; the cherishing and sustaining with solicitude, that life to-day, which the strong hand of necessity must take away to-morrow; all these awaken a thousand undescribable feelings. How the heart is wrung, as often as the eye, or the ear, or the hand, is attracted to attend or to minister to the little trembling prisoner! At length the fatal moment is come: and the afflicting alternative presses, "This innocent, or my own first-born must suffer. If my heart relent, lo, the flaming sword of the destroying angel is within my habitation: My resolution is formed. There is no room for deliberation. Die thou, that my son may live."

But the paschal victim could have no presentiment of its approaching fate. Happy in its ignorance, it could die but once. Christians, need your eyes be directed to your great gospel passover? Behold, your atonement—deliberately chosen of GOD; fixed upon, in the maturity of eternal counsels; under the pressure of the great decree; voluntarily presenting and surrendering himself!—Behold him continually admonished of his approaching sufferings and death; by his own divine prescience, by the perpetual insults and violence of wicked men, by the descent of Moses and Elias to the mount of transfiguration. "The de-

cease

cease which he should accomplish" at length, "at Jerusalem," was continually assuming a blacker and a blacker complexion, from being foreseen, foreknown, and more keenly felt, as the hour drew nigh. Lo, he "treads the wine-prefs alone." The dreadful conflict is begun. What "strong crying with tears" do I hear? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." What "great drops of blood" do I see, distilling from every pore, and "falling to the ground?" Ah! the unrelenting executioner has begun to perform his infernal task: and yet, the bleeding "Lamb opens not his mouth." What sigh is that which pierces my soul? What strange accents burst upon my astonished ear? "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" The conflict is at an end. He bows his head, "It is finished." The victim has "poured out his soul unto death." He has given up the ghost. These "things the angels desire to look into."

"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and love of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Who can "comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height:" who "can know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!"

History of Moses.

LECTURE VIII.

EXODUS xii. 26, 27.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

WITH

PSALM xci. 5—8.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

THE great JEHOVAH, in all the works of his hands, and in all the ways of his providence, is ever preparing still grander displays of his divine perfection than those which have been already submitted to our view. This visible creation, fair, and vast, and magnificent as it is, being composed of perishing materials, and destined, in the eternal plan, to a temporary duration, is passing away, to give place to “new heavens, and a new

new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." He who made all things at first saith, "Behold, I make all things new." The whole Jewish economy, "The adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises :" The patriarchs and the prophets, with all they said, acted and wrote, were but "the preparation of the gospel of peace;" and all issue in Christ the Lord, "in whom all the promises are yea, and amen, to the glory of God the Father." And the kingdom of grace, under the great Redeemer, is only leading to the kingdom of glory.

It is both pleasant and useful, to observe the nature, the occasion and the design, of sacred institutions. A closer inspection generally discovers much more than is apparent at first sight. The ordinance of the passover owes its institution to an event of considerable importance in the history of mankind ; and its abrogation to a still greater. Its celebration commemorates the destruction of all the first-born in Egypt, and the redemption of Israel. Its abolition marks that most memorable era, the death of God's own eternal Son, and the redemption of a lost world, by the shedding of his precious blood. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if, in an ordinance which was intended to expire in the sacrifice of the great "Lamb of Atonement," slain "from the foundation of the world," its divine Author should have thought proper to enjoin many particulars, which figuratively and symbolically pointed out "good things to come," as well as literally expressed good things present.

Several of these significant circumstances, we took occasion to point out to you in the last Lecture. The commencement of the year was changed. The memory of nature's birth was sunk as it were in the memory of the church's deliverance ; and a joyful expectation was excited of the gradual approach of "the fulness of time," the day, the new year's day of the world's redemption. In that sacred festival was

seen

seen God drawing nigh to his Israel, in loving-kindness, tender mercy and faithfulness ; and Israel drawing nigh to their God, in gratitude, love and obedience. The feast was prepared by the removal of all leaven, the emblem of “ malice and wickedness ;” and eaten with unleavened bread, the emblem of “ sincerity and truth.” The victim was appointed to be a “ lamb of the first year, without blemish,” chosen from among the flock, set apart and killed, to preserve the life of him who poured out, and sprinkled its blood ; the figure of Him who was to come ; “ the Lamb of God, who beareth the sin of the world ;” holy, harmless, gentle, patient ; “ delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God :” “ suffering, the just, for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” We are now to continue the subject.

All Israel was engaged in the same service at the same instant of time, and for the self-same reason. All had descended from the same common stock, all were included within the bond of the same covenant, all were involved in the same general distress, all were destined of Heaven to a participation in the same salvation. They appear, in the paschal solemnity, a beautiful and an instructive representation of the great, united, harmonious family of God : who are “ one body, one spirit, and are called in one hope of their calling :” “ who have one Lord, one faith, one baptism :—one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all.” And they are all coming, “ in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”*

As the church in general had one and the same sacrifice, a lamb of the description which has been mentioned ; so every particular family or neighbourhood, according to their number, had their own particular sacrifice, and in that their particular protection

* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6, 13.

tion and repast. The charity which comprehended the whole Israel of God, was thus invigorated and enlivened by being collected and concentered ; and the sacred fire of love, which was in danger of being extinguished by being dispersed too extensively, being thus confined within a narrower circle, lighting on fewer and nearer objects, and aided by reciprocal sympathy and ardour, was blown up into a purer flame. A happy prefiguration of the blessed influence of the gospel, and of its sacred institutions, to rectify, to rivet, and to improve the charities of private life ; to shed peace and joy upon every condition and relation ; gradually to expand the heart, through the progressive, continually enlarging circles of natural affection, friendship, love of country, love of mankind, love to ALL the creation of God.

What must it have been to an Israelitish parent, standing with his children around him, to eat the Lord's passover, to reflect, that while the arrows of the Almighty were falling thick upon the tents of Ham, his tabernacle was secured from the stroke : that while all the first-born in Egypt were bleeding by the hand of the destroying angel : of him, a holy and righteous God demanded no victim, but one from the flock ; spared a darling son, and accepted the blood of a lamb ! What must have been the emotions of the Israelitish first-born themselves, at that awful hour, to reflect on the state of their unhappy neighbours, of the same description with themselves, and on their own condition, had justice, untempered with mercy, struck the blow ! Such as this, but superior, as the deliverance is greater, must be the joy of a truly christian family, which has hope in God, through Christ Jesus the Lord, in reflecting on that grace which has made a difference between them and their sinful neighbours ; which has seasonably warned them “to flee from the wrath that is to come ;” which has “delivered their souls from death, their eyes from tears, their feet from falling.” What must

must be the inexpressible satisfaction of every believer in Christ Jesus, in the confidence of being sprinkled with the blood of atonement, of "being at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," of being "passed from death unto life?" What a happy community is the redeemed of the Lord! Wherever scattered on the face of the whole earth; they are nevertheless gathered together in their glorious Head: separated by oceans and mountains, but united in interest and affection: hated, despised, persecuted of the world; yet cherished, esteemed, protected of the Almighty!

The sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation were *many*, because they were *imperfect*. The sacrifice of the gospel is *ONE*, because once offered it "forever perfects them that are sanctified by it." The ancient institution prescribed a whole lamb for every several family; the gospel exhibits a whole and complete Saviour for every several elect sinner: and that Saviour at once a teacher, an atonement, a ruler; "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

The *application* of the blood of the destined victim in this institution is a most remarkable circumstance, "They shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it." It must not be spilt upon the ground as a worthless thing, nor sprinkled in the entering in of the door, to be trampled upon as an unclean thing; but above and on either side; to be a covering to the head and a bulwark around. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Could the all-discerning eye of God stand in need of such a token, in order to judge between an Israelite and an Egyptian? No. But the distinctions of God's love avail not them who wilfully and wickedly neglect the distinctions of faith and obedience. The blood in the basin is the same with the blood on the door-post; but it is no protection till it be believingly applied. The virtue is dormant till sprinkling call it forth. Surely, this part of the ceremony speaks

to the christian world for itself. Why is mention still made of blood, blood? “the shedding of blood,” “the sprinkling of blood,” “redemption through blood,” and the like? It denotes the life, which consists in the blood of the animal; and it instructs us in this momentous doctrine, that life being forfeited by sin, the blood must be shed, that is, the life must be yielded up, before atonement to justice can be made: that the substitution and acceptance of one life in the room of another, must depend upon the will and appointment of the offended lawgiver: that the blood of slain beasts, having no value nor virtue of its own to take away sin, must derive all its efficacy from the appointment of Heaven, and from its relation to a victim of a higher order: and, that the blood or life of this ONE victim, yielded up to divine justice, is, through its intrinsic worth and the decree of God, of virtue sufficient to take away the sins of the whole world.

But as, in the original institution, the blood of the lamb slain was no protection to the house, till it was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop on the parts of the building, and in the manner directed, so the sovereign balm appointed of the Most High for the cure of the deadly plague of sin, the price of pardon to the guilty, the life of the dead, becomes effectual to the relief of the guilty, perishing sinner, by a particular application of it to his own “wounds, bruises, putrefying sores.” Faith, eyeing the commandment, the power of God and the grace of Christ, is like the bunch of hyssop in the hand of the paschal worshipper, sprinkling the blood of atonement upon “the upper door-post, and the two side-posts,” the understanding, the heart, the life, the ruling and the governed powers of our nature, that the whole may be accepted through the Beloved.

I conclude this part of my subject with quoting a passage from the Targum of Jonathan, respecting the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, as it was performed by the children of Israel in Egypt, which has

has struck myself as uncommonly beautiful and sublime.

“ When the glory of the Lord was revealed in Egypt in the night of the passover, and when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, he rode upon lightning. He surveyed the inmost recesses of our habitations; he stopped behind the walls of our houses; his eyes observed the posts of our doors: they pierced through the casements. He perceived the blood of circumcision, and the blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled upon us. He viewed his people from the heights of heaven, and saw them eating the passover roasted with fire: he saw, and had compassion upon us; he spared, and suffered not the destroying angel to hurt us.”

The inferior circumstances respecting the sacrifice are these. The flesh of the victim was to be eaten in the night season, not in a crude state, nor boiled in water, but roasted with fire; no bone of it was to be broken; no remnant of it left until the morning; or else the remains were to be consumed by fire. I am unwilling entirely to pass over these circumstances as if they were of no especial meaning or importance; for I am thoroughly convinced every iota and tittle relating to this ordinance, has a specific meaning and design. But I frankly acknowledge I cannot discern that design in every particular; and am far from being satisfied with the fanciful and unsupported illustrations of some commentators upon the passage. Should I myself seem to any to have given too much into imagination and conjecture in my ideas of it, or in what is farther to be offered; the nature of the subject, the silence of scripture, the consciousness of honestly aiming at your rational entertainment and religious instruction, and the humble hope that these conjectures are and shall be conformed to the analogy of faith, and if erroneous, innocently so; these will, I am persuaded, secure me a patient hearing, and a candid interpretation.

The

The time of the feast was the night season ; the very juncture when the awful scene was acting, which marred the glory and blasted the strength of Egypt. Inconsiderate man must have his attention roused and fixed by strong and striking circumstances. The moment of execution, the hour of battle, and the like, are awfully interesting to a serious, humane and public-spirited person. Every son of Israel knew, that at the very moment he was eating his unleavened cake with gladness, and the flesh of lambs with a merry heart, “Thousands were falling at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand.” What an alarming demonstration of divine justice ! What an encouraging display of goodness and mercy ! Were the eye opened to see God as he is, were the powers of an invisible world habitually felt, every creature, every season, every event, would possess a quickening, an active, a constraining influence over us. But blind, stupid, sluggish as we are, the midnight bell must toll to rouse us to reflection : death must assume the complexion of sable night, and add artificial to natural horror, in order to force a way into our stony hearts. And God, who knows what is in man, vouchsafes to instruct his thoughtlessness and folly, by acting through the medium of powerful and awakening circumstances upon our imagination and senses. Hence possibly the injunction to eat the passover by night.

It was to be “roasted with fire,” not eaten raw, nor sodden with water. To eat flesh in a crude state is unnatural and unwholesome. And we never find the religious institutions of the living and true God doing violence to innocent natural propensities and aversions, or encroaching on the health and life of his worshippers : for he saith, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Why the one method of preparing it was commanded of God in preference to the other, we pretend not satisfactorily to account for. Was it to secure an uniformity of practice in the minutest circumstances relating to his worship ? Was it to

form

form his church and people to implicit obedience to his will, in points which they comprehend not, as in those which they well understand; in all cases whatever, whether he be pleased to render or to withhold a reason? Was it intended as a symbolical representation of their late condition; tried, and prepared, and refined in the fire of Egyptian oppression; purged, but not consumed by it? Was it a figurative view of the judgment of GOD then executing: Egypt scorched with the flame; Israel enlightened, seasoned, purified by it? Did it look forward unto, and signify some particular circumstance in the person, the doctrine, or sufferings of the great evangelical sacrifice? O Lord, thou knowest. “Secret things belong to thee, but things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children.” We thank thee for what thou hast condescended to reveal to us, and would not presume to “be wise above what is written.”

“Not a bone” of the paschal lamb was to “be broken.” This, as well as some of the foregoing circumstances, is by sundry commentators supposed to be intended as a contradiction to various Pagan superstitions, and particularly to the frantic behaviour of the votaries of Bacchus; who, in the fumes of intoxication or of religious frenzy, committed a thousand abominations and extravagancies; they fell into violent agitations, the pretended inspiration of their GOD; they devoured the yet palpitating flesh of the victims which they had just killed, and broke all their bones to pieces. But, the idolatrous rites of the heathen nations were so various and so contradictory one to another, that we can hardly imagine the great JEHOVAH would condescend to express any concern, whether the rites of his worship were, in every instance, either conformed or opposed to the usages of idolatry. A very famous critic* assigns a very silly reason for this branch of the commandment. He alleges

* Bochart, Hieroz, par. i. lib. ii. cap. 1. fol. 609.

leges it was another indication of the extreme haste with which the passover was to be eaten. "Men in a hurry," says he, "do not stand to pick bones; much less do they take leisure to break them, for the sake of the juice or marrow." As if it required more time to sever the joints, and break the bones by violence, than to dissect and disunite the parts without a fracture. The simple meaning of the precept seems to be, that what was once offered to God should not be unnecessarily disfigured and mangled. The blood must be shed, for that was the seal of God's covenant; the flesh might be eaten, for it was given for the sustenance of man's life; but the bones, forming no part either of food or sacrifice, were to be left in the state in which they were found, till consumed by fire with the remainder of the flesh, if any remained, the next morning. And is it not extremely probable that God might intend, by certain arbitrary tokens, to describe the Messiah; and that the prohibition to break the bones of the paschal lamb was designed to be a type of a remarkable circumstance attending the crucifixion of our Saviour, which Providence watched over with special attention, and brought about by a miracle? "But when the soldiers came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs."* And it is clear from what follows, that the evangelist considered the precept of the law as a prophecy of Christ; "For these things were done," says he, "that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."† In many cases it happens, that the prediction was either not attended to, or had not been understood, till the event has explained it.

Nothing of it was to be "left until the morning." This circumstance was not peculiar to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, but common to almost every other kind of oblation. This will appear if we consult the general laws respecting sacrifice. Thus the prescription

* John xix. 33.

† Verse 36.

tion runs : “ And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered ; he shall not leave any of it until the morning.”* And again, “ When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam, and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the **LORD**. And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day. And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the **LORD**, offer it at your own will. On the same day it shall be eaten up ; ye shall leave none of it until the morrow : I am the **LORD**. ”† The solemn affix, “ I am the **LORD**, ” seems to insinuate, that the reason of the commandment was to be sought in the majesty and authority of the law-giver. And, independent of authority, decency seems to require, that what has once been devoted to a hallowed use should never afterwards appear in a mangled, impure or patrid state. Perhaps superstition was, by this precept, obliquely or intentionally reproved and repressed ; superstition, which loves to feed upon scraps, and to hoard up relics, as if they were sacred things ; superstition, which gives to the fragments of the sacrifice the veneration due only to the sacrifice itself, and to the great Author of it.

We must notice the remaining particulars of this service in the manner in which it was originally performed, “ in haste, ” “ standing, ” “ with loins girded, ” “ with staff in hand, ” ready to depart. The lamb was to be eaten with “ bitter herbs. ” A representation, perhaps, of the mixed nature of every sublunary enjoyment ; and of the wholesome uses of unpalatable adversity. The “ standing ” posture, and the implements of travelling, speak a plain and distinct language. “ Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest. ” “ Here we have no abiding city, but look for one to come. ” “ Now we desire a better country,

* Lev. vii. 15.

† xxii. 27—30.

country, that is, an heavenly." "Arise, let us go hence." A provision was graciously made for such as might be ceremonially unclean at the future seasons of celebration, and the door of mercy and communion was opened to strangers. Blessed prefiguration of the remedy provided for the chief of sinners ; of the refuge opened for the reception of "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel ;" of the liberal, condescending, comprehensive spirit of the gospel ! Christians, ye "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." "Those who *were* afar off, *are* made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Men and brethren, the time is at hand, when a more fearful midnight cry shall be heard than even that which smitten, groaning Egypt raised in the hour of vengeance. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night." "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him ; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Behold, a careless, slumbering world, a world lying in wickedness, is threatened with a death infinitely more dreadful than that which destroyed the first-born, with "the second death," a living death of everlasting banishment "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." From that last plague there is no security but one ; that security, of which the "blood of sprinkling" under the law was but a type. "Run to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." "Flee, flee for refuge ; lay hold of the hope that is set before you." "Behold now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth : Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is

even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

How many things in the scriptures ; in Moses, in the prophets, in the law, in the gospel, are dark and hard to be understood ? But the hour cometh when the veil shall be removed from our eyes ; when the truth as it is in Jesus shall stand confessed without a mystery ; and shall be seen and read of all men. “ What ” he doth, “ ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter.” “ We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” “ For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.”†

* Rom. viii. 32, 33, 34.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

History of Moses.

LECTURE IX.

EXODUS xiii. 17—22.

And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near ; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him : for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you ; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them, by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light ; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

ALL that weak, ignorant, erring man can know, is a few of the smaller objects which are immediately around him ; and of these but a few of the more obvious qualities which they possess, and the relations in which they stand to one another. Remove them but a little as to space or time, and they gradually disappear, till they are at length involved in total darkness.

The distance of a few leagues terminates our vision ; the lapse of a few years erases all traces from our memory. The cloud of night conceals or changes the appearance of things the nearest to us, and the most perfectly known. Here, we are dazzled and confounded by an excess of light ; there, we are checked and repulsed by dimness and obscurity. The sun forbids us to behold his face by reason of his splendour ; the earth and the ocean present to us but their surface ; and the heavens oppose to the eager eye a vault of crystal, saying, “ Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.” We feel ourselves hedged in, fettered, confined on every side. And our condition in this respect is that of every created, limited being. Open prospect after prospect ; expand system upon system ; add faculty to faculty ; yet the prospect is bounded at length. Suns and worlds are capable of being numbered, and there is a height and depth still beyond, which the understanding of an angel cannot fathom.

There is only ONE Being whose duration is immeasurable—whose space is unconfined—whose power is uncontrolled—whose understanding is infinite. With JEHOVAH “ a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.” He alone can “ declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”* He is “ above all, and through all, and in all !” An impenetrable veil hides futurity from every created eye ; but the Spirit of prophecy is pleased sometimes to remove it. Abraham saw the Redeemer’s day afar off, and rejoiced. He saw in prophetic vision the servitude, the affliction, and the deliverance of his posterity, at the distance of four hundred years. To mortal man, whose longest span of existence is diminished to much under a century, four hundred years have something like the appearance of an eternity ; but before God,

time

* Isa. xlvi. 10.

time and space are contracted to a point, to a moment. With him, that which is to be done is already done. Men shape events according to their fancy, their fears, their wishes or their hopes. But “ the counsel of the Lord it shall stand, and he fulfilleth all his pleasure.”

What was the *word* of the Lord to Abraham? “ And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”* What was the *doing* of the Lord in conformity to that word? “ And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle.” “ And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses: and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required: and they spoiled the Egyptians.” Israel came into Egypt few in number, weak and indigent; but they go out from the land of their oppression greatly increased, mighty and formidable; laden with the spoils of their cruel oppressors, the well-earned reward of the labours of many years, and of much sorrow.

It is repeatedly remarked, that the prediction relating to the deliverance of God’s people was fulfilled to a single day. Of this we have a confirmation in the preceding chapter, and the 41st verse; “ And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the *self-same day*, it come to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out of the land of Egypt.” Again, at the 51st verse; “ And it came to

pass,

* Gen. xv. 13, 14.

pas, the *self-same day*, that the *Lord* did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies." And yet on comparing numbers in the prediction and the history of its accomplishment, we find a difference of thirty years. The seventy interpreters were aware of this difficulty, and have obviated it by thus paraphrasing the passage in Exodus, "The sojourning of the children of Israel in the land of *Canaan*, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." To justify which computation we need but to observe, that Moses in the four hundred and thirty years, includes all the time that Abraham had passed in Canaan, previous to the birth of Isaac. And a learned prelate of our own country, archbishop Usher, in his valuable chronology, has proved this calculation to be just. For Abraham was exactly twenty-five years in Canaan before Isaac was born.* From the birth of Isaac to the exodus from Egypt was four hundred and five, which completes the four hundred and thirtieth year mentioned in this passage, and by Paul in the third of the Galatians, 17th verse. Thus perfect are all the ways and works of *God*; thus absolute his power over all persons and all events! No skill, no ardour, no violent efforts on the part of Israel, could accelerate their enlargement. Nor could the combined strength of Egypt, of mankind, of created nature, retard it one single hour!

In order to preserve to all generations the memory of a period so singular and so important in their history,

* Jacob was born to Isaac when he was sixty years old; and at the time he went down to Egypt, according to *his own declaration* to Pharaoh, he was one hundred and thirty; which, added to the twenty-five years of Abraham's pilgrimage, from his leaving Ur of the Chaldees to the birth of Isaac, make two hundred and fifteen. He and his posterity continued in Egypt a like period of two hundred and fifteen years. So that it is plain Moses reckoned in the whole sum of four hundred and thirty years, all the pilgrimages of Abraham and his posterity, from his first leaving his kindred and father's house in Mesopotamia down to their triumphant exit from Egypt, and their setting out on the conquest of Canaan, whose iniquity though not before, was now full.

ry, the ordinance of the passover was to be honoured with an annual celebration ; and, as positive and arbitrary institutions derive all their value and use from a right understanding of their meaning, and the design of their author, express words are put into the mouths of parents and heads of families for the instruction of generations to come, in the nature and reason of this solemn service. “ And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, *This is done*, because of that which the **LORD** did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee, upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth : for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee, in time to come, saying, What is this ? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beasts : therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males ; but all the first-born of my children I redeem.” Hence it appears that, besides this great annual sacrifice, a law was enacted at this time, though it was not to be enforced until they should be put in possession of the promised land, that in grateful remembrance of God’s passing over their first-born when he destroyed those of Egypt, the first-born of the human species, and also of the brute creation, through every age, should be dedicated and set apart as a sacred property. The great Legislator was pleased afterwards, by a particular injunction, to appropriate to himself one whole tribe out of the twelve, in room of the first-born out of every tribe, to minister unto him in holy things ; and in this ordinance the church of **God**, at that early period, both exhibited and enjoyed an emblematical representation of the evangelical priesthood ; not vested in and exclusively

sively belonging to a particular description of men, but the common character and dignity of all christians ; a generation chosen of God, in Christ, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people—that they should shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.” And they are introduced before the throne, with this song of praise in their mouths, “ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

Is it not worth while to compare, seeing the Spirit of God has thought it meet to transmit to us the very numbers, the entire state of Israel, as it were, at the time of its descent into Egypt, and at its departure thence ? The whole number which accompanied Jacob from Canaan, when driven thence by the famine, himself included, was sixty-six ; which, added to the family of Joseph already in Egypt, consisting of himself, Asenath the daughter of the priest of On, adopted by marriage into the family of Abraham, and their two sons, the amount is seventy, when they left that country. In a period of little more than two hundred years, they are increased to the amazing sum of six hundred thousand men of military age, without reckoning females, children of both sexes under twenty, and old men of sixty and upward : for that was the age of superannuation among this people. Taking therefore the calculation so low as four of all the other descriptions for one of the military age, that is, males from twenty to sixty, the whole number of the descendants of Abraham that left Egypt must have been at least three millions. So that, dividing the whole time of their sojourning there into periods of twenty years, it appears that their number was multiplied nearly three times every twenty years. Now, if we consider, that the most rapid state of population in the ordinary course

* Rev. i. 5, 6.

course of nature, and in circumstances the most favourable to it, is a *doubling* the number of inhabitants every twenty years; and that only in the earlier ages of a people or colony; what must we think of this amazing increase in circumstances the most unfavourable: in a people cooped up in a narrow district, and that district not their own, but the property of a nation much more powerful than themselves; a people among whom marriage was grievously discouraged by the want of liberty, by hard and oppressive labour, by subjection to the despotism of a foreign prince, by penal edicts which doomed all their male children to death, and by which, doubtless, multitudes perished, together with their natural increase? The multiplication of Israel in a proportion so great, in a progress so rapid, in a situation so unfriendly, will be in reality found a miracle, though less striking to a superficial observation, being gradually and imperceptibly performed, upon closer attention, a prodigy equal or superior to any that were wrought in immediately effecting their enfranchisement. And this leads us to the grateful acknowledgment of God's wise and gracious providence, in its ordinary operations and effects. What is daily preservation but creation—one omnific “LET THERE BE,” daily, every instant repeated? What is the progress of vegetation, of life and reason, but the continual interposition of the great Source of all being, life and intelligence? What is dissolution and death, but the supporting, vivifying power of God withdrawn from the body which is just now inhabited?

This vast host was accompanied with what Moses calls a mixed multitude. This is supposed to have been made up of the produce of marriages between Israelites and Egyptians; of Egyptians, who, from the miracles which they had seen wrought in favour of Israel, had been determined to follow the fortunes of that people; and of neighbours who, in the ordinary intercourse of mankind, might be brought into contact

tact with them, and who through fear, interest or curiosity, might be induced to follow their camp.

Man, with his usual ignorance and haste, would have been for conducting this mighty army directly to Canaan. And no doubt the same almighty arm which had thus asserted them into liberty, could have led them straight forward to conquest. But, in studying the history of the divine conduct as ordering and governing the affairs of men, we find it is composed partly of the interpositions of Heaven, and partly of the exertions of men. It is not *all* miracle ; that were to encourage eternal indolence and stupidity in rational beings, formed after the image of God, and to reduce men to mere passive clods of earth ; nor is it all, on the other hand, the effect of human skill, industry and diligence ; for that were to resign the government of the world to the frail and the foolish ; that were to weaken the power of religion, which is the life, the joy, the guide, the support of the universe. But we discover divine interposition, to a certain degree, so as to inspire a reasonable confidence in and dependence upon God ; and we discern the exertions of men crowned with success through the blessing of Heaven upon them, and this enforcing the necessity of bringing out and exercising the powers and faculties of our intellectual nature. Israel is delivered from Egypt at once ; but is introduced into Canaan by degrees. The former an act of sovereign power, unmixed with, independent upon human efforts ; the latter, the less perceptible operation of Omnipotence, blending itself with, subduing, directing and promoting the designs and endeavours of reasonable beings, who had a great object in view, and a clear rule to walk by. Thus, in a case of universal importance, the justification and adoption of the sinner, are acts of free, sovereign grace, whereby sin is forgiven, and the right and privileges of sons conferred ; whereas sanctification is the gradual work of the Spirit, supporting us by the way, overcoming our

our enemies by little and little, and making us “ meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

A great multitude of people is always an object of serious attention, and of deep anxiety. Many mouths were to be fed, many humours to be studied, many talents to be employed. Some were to be gained by love, others to be governed by fear ; the impetuosity of one was to be repressed, the timidity and diffidence of another to be countenanced and encouraged ; care was to be exercised about those who were either unable or unwilling to exercise any about themselves. What a charge then was that of Moses and Aaron ! bearing on their shoulders the burden of such an assembly ; a vast multitude agitated with the ordinary passions of human nature ; unarmed, unaccustomed to discipline, untractable ; one moment elated with extravagant hopes, the next depressed with unreasonable fears. The wisdom of a Moses had been unequal to the task, unsupported by the Wisdom which sees all things at one view, and the Power which “ worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

There is a happy disposition in all the evils to which our nature and condition are subject, to find out and to apply their own remedy. Necessity always sets invention to work. Invention puts the machine in motion ; and once in motion, every wheel keeps its place, exerts its power, performs its office. But here the mighty machine, prepared in all its parts according to the plan of infinite wisdom, put together and regulated by the hand of almighty power, and conducted by unchangeable truth and faithfulness, could not vary its motion, could not deviate from its design : and the passage of perhaps four millions of people, with their immense possessions of flocks and herds, and other property, from Egypt to Canaan, will appear one of those singular phenomena in history, which no principles of human conduct, no natural and ordinary concurrence of events, are able to explain ;

plain ; and which must finally be resolved into a wisdom and power preternatural and divine. Accordingly we find Providence taking immediately the charge of them ; but not in the usual way, not by forming a regular discipline, and raising up commanders and magistrates of unusual address and ability, but declaring by sensible tokens, which were seen, read and understood of all, “ I am the Leader and Commander of my people.”

But before we proceed to the consideration of this wonderful symbol of the divine presence, we must attend our author, and take notice of a tender and touching circumstance in the departure from Egypt, namely, the removing of the bones of Joseph. That truly great man had been the saviour of his father’s house when he was alive, and was now the hope of Israel after he was dead. In all their afflictions, his precious dust had been to them the pledge of deliverance ; and now when that deliverance is come, they bear it with them to the land promised to their forefathers, for burial. Thus respectable and useful, in life and in death, are the wise and the good ; thus anxious ought we to be to promote the best interests of mankind, not only while we are yet with them ; but to leave something behind us that may benefit and instruct after we are seen and heard no more. Christians, we carry with us, as our hope in this wilderness, not the bones of a departed deliverer, but the memory of a risen Saviour. The sacred pledge of our final redemption is deposited, not in a coffin, but in this precious record—but in the history of facts, well known and firmly believed by you—but in many great and precious promises given unto you. “ For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again ; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” The ashes of the patriarch Joseph could not rest in the tomb till Israel came to the possession of their promised inheritance ; so the Spirit and providence of the great Redeemer are in perpetual motion

and

and exercise, till he shall have gathered into one all his redeemed unto himself ; till the youngest of his sons, the meanest of his daughters, being glorified, shall take possession of their purchased inheritance, “ the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.”

Thus then Israel takes his departure ; thus joyfully, thus triumphantly, thus increased ; and “ not one sickly or feeble among them ;” a wonder not inferior to any of the rest. But all “ is of the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

The plain of Rameses was the first great rendezvous of the Lord’s host. They had built, as part of their task-work, a city of that name at the command of Pharaoh. But it was also the name of a region of Egypt elsewhere called Goshen ; the name which Joseph chose for the reception of his aged parent ; because being situated nearest to Canaan, it diminished the length and fatigue of his journey, and being a grassy country, suited his family’s employment, that of shepherds. The nearness to Canaan might accordingly be now again considered as a favourable circumstance to the return of Israel thitherward. If we may credit Philo, the two countries were not above three days journey distant the one from the other. And certain it is that the patriarchs, encumbered with a convoy laden with corn, easily performed a journey to a more distant part of Egypt, and back again, in the course of not many weeks at most. Moses might therefore have, without much difficulty, conducted the people of his charge to the place of their destination in a very small space of time. But was the distance of place the only difficulty which they had to encounter ? How could men inured to slavery, men just escaped from the rod of a tyrannical oppressor, have the courage to meet the prowess and discipline of the warlike nations of Canaan ; unprovided with arms for the field, and with military engines

gines for the attack of fortified towns, had they been bold enough to attempt to take possession by force. Some interpreters, indeed, render the word *harnessed*, in the eighteenth verse of the thirteenth chapter, *armed*. But the term in the original is so equivocal, and the learned attempts to determine its meaning are so unsuccessful, that we remain still in the dark about its true meaning. The presumption certainly is, that the Israelites were *not* armed. What had a nation of shepherds, living by sufferance in a foreign land, to do with arms? Would the policy of Egypt have permitted it? But Moses, the most accurate of historians, takes care to point out a circumstance which furnishes the first idea of putting arms into the hands of Israel. After the waves of the Red Sea had swallowed up the Egyptian army, their dead bodies with their arms were miraculously cast on shore, and provided Israel with armour from their spoils.

It is evident that God intended to form the courage and discipline of his people in the wilderness; before he tried these upon the nations whom they were destined to subdue. Nay, further, it was evidently his design to settle their whole civil and religious polity, while they were yet in an erratic state, that when they came to Canaan there might be nothing to do but to take possession, and to execute the laws which they had already received. And alas, what shall we say? This swarm of people, numerous as the sand upon the sea-shore, with the exception of one or two, and Moses their leader among the rest, thus pompously and powerfully saved, were saved from Egypt, but to die in the wilderness. Men die, but the church lives: and the church is the care of God. “Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”*

Instead

* Psal. lxxvii. 19.

Instead then of marching straight northward, in the direction of Canaan, their course is bent eastward, to the great wilderness which bounds Egypt and Arabia Petraea: God himself leading the way, in a most wonderful display of his glorious presence and power, described in the words which I read at the opening of the Lecture. “ And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them, by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”* In this, GOD spake at once to the understanding and to the fenses. Could any Israelite doubt that the Lord was there? He had but to open his eyes, whether it were by day or by night, and lo, a thick cloud obscuring the brightness of the one, or a flaming fire dispelling the shades of the other, proclaimed the dread presence of JEHOVAH. Could any one call in question his kindness, when he saw darkness become a guide, and fire a protector? Durst any one presume to approach too nigh, when dimness impenetrable, and light inaccessible, alternately guarded his pavilion? Was it possible for any heart to fear, when the Most Mighty thus declared, in language more emphatical than can be conveyed by words—“ Lo, I am for you! Who is he that can, that dare to be against you?”

The appearances of God are suited to the circumstances of his people. Cloud by night would have been to increase the horror, and to multiply the unwholesome damps of that season. Fire by day would have been adding fuel to a flame, already intensely hot, in a burning climate and parched soil. But tempered, adapted, distributed, according to wisdom not capable of error, the peculiar inconvenience of each season is relieved; and the ills of nature are remedied

* Exod. xiii. 20, 21, 22.

remedied by the dispensations of grace. The cloudy fiery pillar is a manifestation of Deity, suited to a wilderness state. In heaven, a God of love is light, without "any darkness at all." In hell, a God of implacable wrath is perpetual darkness, without one ray of light. On earth, a God of justice and mercy is darkness and light, in successive order and perfect harmony. In heaven, he is a flame that irradiates, cheers and quickens; in hell, a fire still consuming, never to be extinguished; on earth, fire in a cloud, mercy flowing in a spacious channel, judgment restrained. Men can only discover that of God which he is pleased to reveal to them. Whether he is pleased to turn his dark or bright side to us, we are stationed equally at a distance from him. To be sensible of our own darkness is to be partakers of his marvellous light. All that the brightest noon of human reason can discover is, that it is ignorance and folly, when placed in comparison with the wisdom of GOD.

Might not this wonderful pillar prefigure to the ancient church the person and office of the Redeemer of the world? Behold the divine essence wrapped up in, and closely united to, a veil of flesh and blood. Behold Deity raising our nature to incorruptibility and glory "in CHRIST, the first-fruits; and afterwards in all that are Christ's, at his coming." Do we not perceive in it, humanity bringing down the divine nature to our bearing and perception; "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declaring him to us." "The word made flesh" instructing the ignorant, cheering the disconsolate, directing the wanderer, refreshing the weary; guiding our waking, guarding our sleeping moments; "a partaker of our flesh and blood, that he may be a merciful High-Priest;" declared the SON of GOD with power; men adoring and submitting; the powers of hell broken and discomfited: the triumph of heaven complete. "The Lord our God is a sun and shield: the

the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* “Fear not, O Israel, the Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going-out, and thy coming-in, from this time forth, and even forevermore.”†

* Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

† Psal. cxxi. 5—8.

History of Moses.

LECTURE X.

EXODUS xiv. 21, 22.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

IN the little benefits which men confer upon each other, it generally happens that some untoward circumstance insinuates itself, and occasions, to one of the parties at least, mortification, disappointment or disgust; for nothing human is perfect. A gracious action is frequently resented as an injury, from the ungracious manner in which it is performed. I am charmed with both the matter of that kindness shewn me, and the affectionate disposition which prompted it; but alas, it arrived an hour too late! Another prevented my wishes; and I prized not the blessing, because I was not instructed in its value by feeling the want of it. This favour done me is very great; but it is not precisely the thing I looked for; or, it is so clogged with some unpleasant condition, that I would rather be without it: it affords me present relief, but will it not involve me in greater difficulties hereafter? Had I failed in my expectations from this quarter, I should easily have gained my end by applying

applying to another friend. In a word, there is a perpetual *something*, in the friendly communications of men, which continually mars the worth of what is given and received. And no wonder, if we consider that favours are not always granted from affection, nor accepted with gratitude. But the bounties of Heaven possess every quality that can enhance their value, and endear their Author to a sensible heart. Infinitely valuable in themselves, they flow from love. The “good and perfect gifts, which come down from the Father of lights,” are given “liberally, and without upbraiding.” Exactly what we need, they come precisely at the moment when we want them most, or when they are most beneficial to us. Worthy of God to bestow, they cannot be unworthy of us to receive. Were he to withhold his gracious aid, in vain should we look for relief from any other quarter. Productive of present satisfaction and joy, his benefits involve us in no future distress, shame or remorse. Serviceable to the body, they are at the same time improving to the mind. Important and interesting for time, they have an influence upon eternity.

The gracious interpositions of Jehovah, in behalf of his chosen people, have this peculiar recommendation to our attention, as to that people’s grateful observation and acknowledgment—that they were not in the usual course of things ; they were the fruits of the constant and unremitting care of a special providence ; they were the suspension or alteration of the established laws of nature ; they were the operation of a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm, sensibly controlling the winds, the waves and the clouds ; and subduing the most ungovernable elements to its purpose. Other parents are endued with transitory affections and attachments, suited to the transitory nature of the trust committed to them. The hen tends her unfeathered brood with the vigilance of a dragon, and the boldness of a lion. But maternal tenderness and anxiety diminish and expire with the occasion of

them, namely, the weakness and inexperience of her young ones.' When the son is become a man, paternal care relaxes, and parental authority is at an end. But, as the authority of our heavenly Father never ceases, so his bowels of compassion are never restrained ; his vigilance is never lulled to rest, his care never suspended ; because his offspring is, to the last, impotent, improvident, imperfect.

In vain had Israel, by a series of miracles unparalleled in the annals of mankind, been rescued from Egyptian oppression, had not the same almighty arm which delivered them at first, continued to protect and support them. The strength of Egypt, broken as it was, had been sufficient to force them back. The wilderness itself had been fatal to them, without a foe. How easily are the greatest deliverances forgotten ; how soon are the most awful appearances familiarized to the mind ! The very first threatening of danger effaces from the memory of these Israelites all impression of the powerful wonders which had just passed before them, and eclipses the glory of that cloud which, at that very instant, presented itself to their eyes, and overshadowed their heads. But, let not self-flattery impose upon us, as if we were more faithful and obedient than they were. It is the mere deception of vanity and self-love to suppose, that "if one were to arise from the dead, we would be persuaded ;" that if we saw a miracle wrought, we would believe ; that if we heard Christ teach in our streets, we would " forsake all and follow him." The man, whom the usual appearances of nature do not move, would soon become insensible to more uncommon phenomena. For, extraordinary things frequently repeated, are extraordinary no longer, and consequently soon lose their force. If the daily miracles of God's mercy and loving-kindness fail to convince men, what reason is there to hope, that mere exertions of power would produce a happier effect ? If Christ, speaking by his word and ministering servants,

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be treated with neglect, is it likely that his *person* would be held in veneration? If men “hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”* Is it not notorious, that Christ’s personal ministrations were slighted, his miracles vilified, his character traduced?

Whose conduct is the more absurd and criminal, that of Pharaoh, in pursuing after and attempting to bring back a people who had been a snare and a curse to himself and his kingdom; or that of Israel, in trembling at the approach of an enemy, whom God had so often subdued under them? Frail nature looks only to the creature; to surrounding mountains, opposing floods, persecuting foes: hence terror, confusion and astonishment. But faith eyes the pillar, the residence of divine majesty, and then mountains sink, seas divide, the chariot and horseman are overthrown. Every passion, when it becomes predominant, renders us silly and unreasonable; and none more so than fear. In danger and distress it is natural, but it is foolish, to impute to another the evils which we fear or feel. It seems to be an alleviation of our own misery, if we can contrive to shift the blame of it upon the shoulders of our neighbour. Hence Moses is loaded with the imputation of a deliberate design of involving his nation in this dire dilemma, between Pharaoh and the Red Sea, and of selling them to the foe. A high and responsible situation is far from being an enviable one. If things go well, the conductor of the undertaking receives but a divided, a mutilated praise. If an enterprise fail, the whole blame of the miscarriage is imputed to him. The astonished multitude dare not directly attack God himself. No: the cloudy pillar hangs over their heads, ready to burst, in thunder and fire, on the man who presumed to aim his shafts so high. But their impiety seeks the pitiful shelter of a subterfuge; they murmur against Moses, because they imagine they can do it

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* Luke xvi. 31.

with impunity: and think to escape the resentment of the master, though they are wounding him through the sides of his servant. Mark yet again the folly and unreasonableness of fear. “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.” What were they afraid of now? A grave in the wilderness. What do they put in comparison with, and prefer to it? A grave in Egypt. It was a grave at the worst. Their wretched lives had got at least a short reprieve. If they died now, they died at once; and died like men, defending their lives, liberty, and families: not pouring out life, drop by drop, under the whip of a task-master. But slavery has broken their spirit. They are reduced to the lowest pitch of human wretchedness; for this, surely, is the last stage of it. “It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.”

To this abject view of degeneracy and dejection, two objects are placed in contrast—the calmness and intrepidity of Moses, and the majesty and power of God. In contemplating the former of these, as one great object of these Lectures is to unfold human character, and to hold up to imitation and applause praiseworthy conduct, let me endeavour to fix your attention upon the more obvious features of the great man, who is here drawing his own portrait.

All the great interests of Moses were embarked, with those of the commonwealth of Israel. His lot was cast into the common lap. He had made a sacrifice unspeakably greater than any individual of the congregation had done. His prospects, for either himself or his family, were neither brighter nor more flattering than those of the obscurest Hebrew among them.

them. If there were danger from the pursuing host of Pharaoh, his share, most assuredly, was not less than that of any other man. He had rendered himself peculiarly obnoxious to that stern, unrelenting tyrant, and must have been among the first victims of his resentment. But the pressing danger of Moses did not arise from Pharaoh, and the Egyptians, but from an intimidated, distracted multitude, who were ready to wreak their vengeance on whoever might first meet their resentment, or could be most plausibly charged as the author of their misfortunes. The composure of Moses, in such circumstances, is therefore justly to be considered as an instance of uncommon heroism and magnanimity. But why do we talk of heroism? the man who fears God knows no other fear. In the confidence of faith, though he knew not yet which way God was to work deliverance for Israel, he thus attempts to diffuse the hope, which he felt irradiating his own soul: "Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians which ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Let me entreat you to observe, that the agent in this great transaction is also the historian of it; and that the resolution and spirit of the one is to be equalled only by the modesty and simplicity of the other. In the hands of one of the eloquent orators of Greece or Rome, what a figure would this passage of the life of the Jewish legislator have made, could we suppose them entering into the situation of a stranger, with the warmth which they feel in delineating the characters and conduct of their own heroes, and embellishing the dignity of modest merit with the glowing ornaments of rhetoric? But scripture says much, by saying little. And the meek reserve, the unaffected conciseness of the sacred historian, infinitely exceed the diffusive and laboured panegyrics of profane poetry or history. We have already, perhaps, deviated

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too far from that beautiful simplicity ; and diminished, instead of magnifying our object, by multiplying words. We hasten therefore, with our author, to contemplate an object of infinitely higher consideration than himself ; to which he constantly brings his own, and instructs us to bring our tribute of praise.

Behold the obstructions, which nature and art and accident have assembled to distress, to discourage, and to destroy the church of God ! An impassable ridge of mountains upon the right hand and upon the left ; the roaring sea in front ; a powerful, exasperated, revengeful enemy following close behind ; internal weakness, irresolution and dissension : the voice of sedition loud ; Moses on his face before God. In such a situation as this, Omnipotence alone can save. No voice but that of a God is worthy of being heard. Be silent then, O heavens, and listen O earth, it is God, who speaks. " And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me ? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward ! " What sublimity, simplicity, and force was here ! " Go forward ! " What, into the raging billows ? Great God, thy commands declare thy name and thy nature ! What power except thine own, but must have been exposed and disgraced, by assuming such a high tone of authority ! But what obstacle can oppose Him, who said, " Let there be light, and there was light ? " who spake, and it was done ; who gave commandment, and it stood fast ? "

My heart is agitated with a mixture of fear and joy as I proceed. " The Lord God has given the word, — Let the people go forward." When lo, the conducting pillar instantly changes its position, and solemnly retreats to the rear of the Israelitish host. The word given clears all the way before them, and " the glory of the Lord becomes their reward." Now, behold the double effect of this symbol of the divine presence ! To Israel, the cloud is all light and favour ; to the Egyptians, all darkness and dismay. To those, night

night shineth as the day—to these, there is obscurity at noon-day! “And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them ; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel ; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these*: so that the one came not near the other all the night.” Awful distinction! Where shall we find the solution of the difficulty? where, but in this, “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy ; and whom he will he hardeneth.”*

To prepare us for the history of the miracle which follows, give your attention, for a few moments, to what every man and woman among you may have observed a thousand and a thousand times. Go to the bank of the river, go to the shore of the sea, and twice in every twenty-four hours, as certainly as light proceeds from the sun, what is now dry land will be covered with water, and what is now overflowed shall infallibly become dry ground. Farther, when a little wandering star, called the moon, is in this direction, or in this, the whole waters of the globe, in the ocean, in the seas, in the rivers, are elevated or depressed to such a certain degree. Let that planet be in an eastern or a western direction, the tide is precisely at the same pitch of height or depth. After we have made this remark, which is obvious to the notice and level to the understanding of a child ; the question will naturally occur, What, does this never fail? May we depend and act upon the certainty of such a regular succession and change taking place? Do the waters of the earth thus certainly feel, or seem to feel the various appearances of the moon? Then it cannot be without the design and interposition of an intelligent and powerful cause, which never misses its aim, is never off its guard, is never thwarted or defeated by unforeseen

* Rom. ix. 18.

foreseen obstacles. Then, that invisible, unknown, incomprehensible power, may exercise a discretionary influence over the stream of a particular river, over the billows of a particular sea. He may, with or without apparent second causes, make the current overflow its banks, or the channel to become dry.

Or, to make another appeal to common observation and experience, when the sun is in such a certain position with respect to our earth, and the wind blows in such a direction, the water in that lake will be liquid and transparent, and the smallest, lightest pebble will sink to the bottom. But let the elevation of the sun be changed to an angle somewhat more acute, and let the wind shift into the opposite quarter, then, beyond all doubt, the self-same water shall become solid as the rock, lose its transparency, and become capable of sustaining any weight that can be put upon it. How easy had it been for Him, who produces regularly these changes in the course of every changing year, to have given the globe such a position, as would have rendered the hoary deep one vast mountain of ice, all the year round, or have prevented a single drop of water from ever being congealed. And "wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible," that such an one, willing to make his power known, and his grace felt, should at his own time, and in his own way, do that in a particular instance, which he could have done perpetually and universally. Grant me the usual appearances and operations of nature, and I am prepared for all the uncommon, miraculous phenomena, with which the God of nature may see meet to present me. We come, accordingly, to the history of dividing the Red Sea, perfectly convinced that he who made it at first, can make of it whatever he pleases; and thoroughly satisfied that the occasion of such a notable miracle, as it is related by Moses, was entirely worthy of it.

If it be a just rule in criticism, that a Deity is never to be introduced but when his interposition is necessary,

essary, and on occasions becoming his dignity, the Mosaic account of this wonderful event, stands fully justified in point of taste as well as authenticity. The powerful rod is once more stretched out. The east wind blows: the sea retires; and a safe and easy passage is opened for Israel through the channel of the deep. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

"Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." The word which commands the progress also prepares the way. As in latter times, by the effectual working of the same almighty power, the grace which cured the father's unbelief, at the self-same instant likewise cast the devil out of the son. It is the sensible language of the common proverb, "The king said, Sail; but the *wind* said, No." The command of the King of kings alone procures prompt obedience from every creature; for all are his subjects in fact, as well as of right. Thrones, principalities and powers are subject unto him; and "a sparrow falleth not to the ground without our heavenly Father." When we behold our blessed Saviour, in the New Testament, saying to the stormy wind and the foaming billows, "Peace, be still," and a great calm instantly ensuing; and compare it with the work of the great Jehovah under review, we are led directly to the conclusion of the Roman centurion who observed the wonders attending the crucifixion, "Truly this was the Son of God."

In the history of our own country there is a passage, which the event we are considering suggests to our thoughts, and which does honour to the piety, modesty and good sense of the prince whom it concerns. Canute, one of the early kings of the southern division of England, justly disgusted at the gross and impious adulation of some of his courtiers, who ascribed to him the attributes which belong only to God, and called him "lord of the earth and of the sea," that he

He might check their folly by something more than a simple reproof, commanded his chair of state to be placed on the beach near Southampton, during the flowing of the tide. Arrayed in his royal robes, and attended by all the nobility and great men of his court, he sat down with his face towards the sea, and thus addressed it ; “ I charge thee upon thy allegiance, O sea, to advance no farther. Here I, thy lord, have thought proper to fix my station. Know thy distance ; respect my authority, nor dare to touch the feet of thy sovereign, under pain of his highest displeasure.” The swelling billows, regardless of his command and threatenings, continued to rush in, advanced impetuously to the steps of his throne, and speedily constrained the monarch and his train to retire. Upon which, turning round to his flatterers, he observed, “ that he only deserved to be acknowledged as Lord of the land and the sea, whose will the winds and the waves obeyed.”

The breadth of the passage opened through the Red Sea must have been very considerable indeed, to have afforded to such a multitude as four millions of people, for less there could not be, space to get over in a single night’s time. To determine this we must have recourse to calculation. But your time being far spent, this, together with an attempt to solve some of the difficulties of the dispensation, and to remove some of the objections which infidelity has raised to the credibility or miraculousness of the history, must make a constituent part of another Lecture.

In practically applying this subject, we may consider the Red Sea, by which the armies of Israel were stopt short, as an emblematical representation of that great fight of affliction, that sea of trouble, through which every believer must pass in his way to the heavenly Canaan. Through the furnaces of Egypt, through the paths of the Red Sea, through the swellings of Jordan, God’s ancient people at length got possession of the promised land. And it is “ through manifold

manifold tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God." It is of importance not only that we be going forwards, but that we be making progress; that growth in grace should keep pace with the uninterrupted flux of human life. The course which Providence leads us, though neither the shortest nor the most desirable, will be found upon the whole the safest, the surest and the best. The possession of Canaan is not always the next step to our escape from Egypt. Justification by the grace of God puts us beyond the reach of our enemies, and adoption makes good our title to "the inheritance of the saints in light;" but it is sanctification that makes us meet for the enjoyment of the purchased possession. The Red Sea seemed to put an end to Israel's progress, but actually shortened the distance. So affliction, while it appears intended to overwhelm, is accelerating the believer's speed to his Father's house above. "All these things are against me," faith frail, faltering, erring man, in his haste. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," faith the better informed, the experience-taught christian, on reviewing the mysterious ways of Providence; and on having attained "the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul." If we look to the creature only, all is dark and comfortless; nothing but cloud. When through the creature we look to an invisible God, all is peace and joy. We cannot remove mountains, nor turn floods into dry ground. It is not meet we should be trusted with such power. Obedience is our proper province; submission to the will of God our truest wisdom; and when we follow the direction of Providence, our way cannot but be prosperous. "Lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Human conduct is a woeful inversion of this rule. We torment ourselves about the event over which we have no power, and trifle with the commandment with which alone we have to do. We neglect our duty, and then foolishly and impiously complain that we are

are unkindly dealt by, when Providence promotes not, or crosses our inclinations. Let us shew cheerful and unreserved compliance; and be the issue what it may, whether our wishes be opposed or succeed, we shall at least have the consolation of reflecting, that the miscarriage is not chargeable to our own perverseness or folly. It is a dreadful, it is a two-edged evil, at once to lose our aim, and incur the just displeasure of God by disobedience. "Thy will," O Father, "be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Amen.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XI.

EXODUS XV. 1, 2.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation : he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my Father's God, and I will exalt him.

TO no one man has the world been so much indebted for rational pleasure and useful knowledge, as to the inspired author of these sacred books. Moses, as he is the most ancient, so he is by far the best writer that ever existed. Never in one and the same character were united talents so various, so rare, and so valuable. He may without hesitation be pronounced, the most eloquent of historians, the sublimest of poets, the profoundest of sages, the most sagacious of politicians, the most acute of legislators, the most intrepid of heroes, the clearest sighted of prophets, the most amiable of men. The qualities of his heart seem to strive for the mastery with those of the understanding : so that it is difficult to determine whether, as the reputed son of Pharaoh's daughter, as a voluntary exile from the splendour of a court, as the sympathizing friend of his afflicted brethren, as the bold protector of virgin innocence, as the contented shepherd of Jethro's flock, as the magnanimous assertor of Israelitish

Israelitish liberty, or finally, as king in Jeshurun, ruling the thousands of Israel with meekness and wisdom—he most challenges our admiration and praise. Had the world never been favoured with his works, or were it now to be deprived of that precious treasure, the loss were inconceivably great. Who does not shudder at the thought? What a fearful gap in the history of mankind! What a blow to take, what a blank in science, what an impoverishing of the public stock of harmless pleasure, what an injury to the dearest, the best, the everlasting interests of mankind!

The venerable man, who has for so many evenings past condescended to delight and instruct us by the relation of events the most singular, interesting and important, assumes this night a new character; and in strains the sweetest and boldest that bard ever sung; in verses the loftiest that the imagination of poet ever dictated, rouses, warms, transports the mind. We forget the distance of three thousand years. We feel ourselves magically conveyed to the banks of the Red Sea. We join in the acclamations of the redeemed of the Lord, as this song of Moses swells upon our ear. “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots, and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.”* How wonderfully suited to each other, the event and the celebration of it!

In fulfilling the promise made in the conclusion of the last Lecture, and executing the business of the present, three objects are proposed. First, to attempt a vindication of the history of the passage of the Red

Sea,

* Verses 1, 19, 5.

Sea, from some objections which have been made to the credibility or miraculousness of it. Secondly, to make a few criticisms on the sacred hymn which was composed on the occasion, and now, in part, read in your hearing ; in the view of pointing out a few of its more striking beauties. And, thirdly, to make a few remarks on sacred poesy in general, tending to evince its superior excellency ; and to point out the delicacy and difficulty of attempting to amplify or imitate what the inspired poets have written, as helps to devotion. In the first I shall, without ceremony or apology, borrow the assistance of the pious and learned author of *Dissertations, historical, critical, theological and moral, on the most memorable events of the OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT history*,—James Saurin, late minister of the French church at the Hague.* In the second, I shall submit to be instructed by an ingenious, pious and eloquent professor of rhetoric in the university of Paris, who has made choice of this passage, expressly for the purpose of exemplifying the majesty, beauty and simplicity of the scripture style.† And in the third, I shall do little more than transcribe from an elegant, penetrating and instructive moralist of our own age and country.‡ To return :

If we collect the several circumstances of this wonderful piece of history, it will readily be acknowledged, that there is here presented to the mind one of the greatest, or rather a series of the greatest miracles, which the hand of Omnipotence ever wrought in behalf of any nation. It is not therefore to be wondered at if the enemies of revelation have endeavoured to fully their lustre, and impeach their credibility.

Three methods have been employed for this purpose—To ascribe these events to natural causes—To put them on a footing with others related in profane history, and to represent them as contradictory and inconsistent,

* Tom. i. Disc. xlix.

† Rollin Bel. Let. Tom. ii. Eloq. de Liv. Sacr.

‡ Johnson's Life of the poet Waller.

inconsistent. Three bulwarks of infidelity ; as many grounds of triumph for truth.

First, these events, which we ascribe entirely to the almighty power of God, have been accounted for from the common and natural operation of cause and effect. Eusebius has preserved and transmitted to us a fragment from an ancient author, Artapanes,* to this purpose: "Those of Memphis, one of the chief cities of ancient Egypt, allege, that Moses perfectly understood the country ; that he had accurately observed the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and took advantage of the retreat of the tide to lead the people over. But they of Heliopolis relate the matter differently, saying, that while the king was pursuing the Israelites, Moses, by the command of Heaven, struck the waters with a rod, upon which they immediately separated, and left a spacious and safe passage for that great multitude ; and, that the Egyptians attempting to follow them the same way, were dazzled and confounded by preternatural fires, lost their way, and by the reflux of the sea, were overtaken in the midst of the channel, and thus all perished either by water or by fire."

Now, granting to this quotation all the force that unbelief can give it, this evidently appears upon the face of it, that Moses has vouchers of his divine legislation, even in Egypt, even among the idolaters themselves. If the Memphis accuse our historian of endeavouring to make a natural pass for a miraculous event, the Heliopolitans acknowledge that it was preternatural, and ascribe it to an immediate interposition of Heaven. And this concession is important, when we consider that it comes from the mouth of an enemy.

Again, the supposition of the Memphis must be rejected by all those who pay any regard to the authority of Moses, and of the other sacred writers. He himself indeed admits, that the effect was forwarded by

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* Euseb. *Prepar.* Lib. ix. Cap. xxvii.

the assistance of a strong east wind. And whatever he ascribes to that, may seem so far to derogate from the greatness of the miracle. But it is no less true, that he throws out nothing like an insinuation that the passage of the vast host of Israel was produced by the intervention of second causes. And all the inspired authors, who, after him, have mentioned it or alluded to it, acknowledge *only* a supernatural agency. Thus Joshua, who was an eye-witness and a party deeply concerned in the event. “For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God forever.”* Thus, Psalm lxvi. 6. “He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him.” And lxxviii. 13. “He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap.” And cvi. 9. “He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths as through the wilderness.” And Heb. xi. 29. “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.” So that Moses, Joshua, David, and Paul, have but one and the same opinion on this subject.

But farther, the essence of a miracle does not always consist in counteracting or suspending the laws of nature. One of the most contemptible of the adversaries of religion has weakly imagined,† that by a single objection he was able to invalidate one of the bulwarks, and shake one of the pillars of revelation. “These miraculous effects,” says he, “are referred, by the confession of scripture historians themselves, to the operation of second causes. It was by warming the

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body

* Josh. iv. 23, 24.

† Spinoza Tract. Theol. Polit. Cap. vi.

body of a child, that Elijah brought him to life again. It was by applying clay, or dust mingled with spittle, to the eyes of a blind man, that Jesus Christ restored him to sight. It was by a wind, that Moses brought locusts upon Egypt, and obtained a passage through the Red Sea.” To this it is replied—That the most common and natural things become miracles, when they present themselves precisely at the time and in the manner prescribed by Him who commands their appearance, for the confirmation and establishment of a certain doctrine. What so natural and common, for example, as to see the sun shining one moment in full and unobstructed glory, and the next darkened and concealed by clouds? But, if a person publishing a new doctrine as divine, should undertake to prove his mission by changing the appearance of the bright orb of day, at his pleasure, and by shewing him either in unclouded majesty, or eclipsed and shorn of his beams, according as he gave the word; and should we behold this very ordinary natural phenomenon actually and uniformly obeying the mandate, would not such an event, however natural in itself, become preternatural and miraculous from its circumstances? Thus, there might be occasion for the influence of the wind, to favour and facilitate the passage of Israel. But, how was it possible for their leader, by mere human sagacity, to discover that a wind from such a quarter, springing up exactly at such an hour, should harden the bottom of the deep?

But, supposing the philosophy of Moses sufficiently accurate to assure him, that at such a time he might in safety march over his cumbersome retinue; could it inform him also that Pharaoh and his captains would certainly be mad enough to follow them through that dangerous route? Could it assure him that the rashness of the tyrant, and the law which regulated the flowing of the sea, would exactly keep time, so as effectually to produce the destruction of his whole army? The flux and reflux of the tide were known to

to Moses ; but, was it entirely unknown to the Egyptians ? What, in so great an army, led by the sovereign in person, in a land renowned for natural knowledge, was there no man astronomer enough to know, that the difference of a few hours is every thing in a case of this sort ; that to be in such a spot, at such a time, was inevitable destruction ? Incredible ! impossible !

Finally, it is altogether inconceivable that the space of three or four hours, the utmost that an ebb merely natural could have afforded them, was sufficient for the transition of such an astonishing multitude as that which Moses conducted. The learned Calmet has so fully demonstrated this point,* as to enforce the conclusion, that no degree of human knowledge could have disclosed to Moses a foresight of the events which proved so propitious to him. Not therefore to the superiority of genius, but to a power divine, the praise is to be ascribed. And to the same principle we must recur in order to explain the mighty difference which Providence puts between the Israelites and the Egyptians, in the midst of the Red Sea.

Attempts have been made to debase the dignity of this great event, by reducing it to the level of similar appearances recorded by profane historians. That degenerate son of Israel, Josephus, first started this objection. These are his words ; " This," speaking of the passage of the Red Sea, " I have related with all the circumstances, as I find them in our sacred authors. Nobody ought to think it an incredible thing, that a people which lived in the innocence and simplicity of the first ages, might have found a way through the sea to save themselves. Whether it was that the sea itself opened it for them, or whether it was done by the will of God : since the same thing happened long after to the Macedonians, when they passed through the sea of Pamphylia, under the conduct of Alexander, when God thought fit to make use

* *Dissert. sur le passage de la Mer Rouge.*

use of that people for the destruction of the Persian empire, as it is affirmed by all the historians who have written the life of that prince. However, I leave all men to judge of this matter as they think fit." Thus far Josephus.*

The other instances which some presume to be put in competition with this, are the approach of Scipio with his army to the attack of New Carthage, by means of an extraordinary ebb at the change of the moon, recorded by Livy :† a similar ebb of the river Euphrates, related by Plutarch, in his life of Lucullus ; and, a flood altogether as singular, upon the coast of Holland, in the year 1672 ; which kept up for twelve whole hours, and was apparently the means of preserving that republic from the consequences of a joint attack of the fleets of England and France. It is handed down to us in the life of the famous admiral De Ruyter, who had the command of the Dutch squadron at that time. Neither your time nor patience admitting of an inquiry into the truth of these several facts, we satisfy ourselves with observing, that admitting them to be true, not one of them is any way worthy to be compared with the Mosaic account of the passage across the Red Sea. The pointed and particular prediction of Moses ; the rod employed, and the instantaneousness of the effect ; the facility and speed of the passage ; the rashness of the Egyptians ; their tragical end ; every thing in short concurs to render this an unparalleled event. And nothing but an immoderate desire of depreciating the miracles of the sacred history, could have attempted to diminish this celebrated transit into a comparison with any of the other events which are alluded to.

The third objection is, to the truth of the history ; pretended to be taken from the history itself. The time allotted by Moses, by his own account, for the congregation, consisting of so many myriads, to pass over,

* Antiq. Jud. Lib. ii. Cap. vii.

† Lib. xxvi. Cap. xlvi.

over, is considered by the objectors as much too short for the purpose. But in order to support it, they are obliged to go into uncertain, fanciful and unsupported conjectures, about the breadth of the Red Sea at the place where the passage was opened. They make the breadth of that passage just what it suits their own arbitrary conjecture and calculation. They must needs constrain a great multitude, in very peculiar circumstances, unaccustomed to discipline, stimulated by fear, and borne on the wings of hope, to move with the leisure and deliberation of a regular army. They will not deign to acknowledge the power and grace of the Most High in every part of the transaction. They overlook the description given of that people, Psalm cv. 37. as a people full of strength and vigour, and "not one sickly among them." They forget what God himself soon after says of them, "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." We conclude, that as the case taken all together was singular, unprecedented, and followed by nothing like it; so the particular circumstances of it are likewise singular and unexampled, and will, with every candid person, bear out Moses, the sacred historian, against the charge of being inconsistent with himself.

We proceed to the second object which we proposed, namely, to point out a few of the more striking beauties of the sacred song, which was composed and sung in grateful acknowledgment of that great deliverance which we have been contemplating. What will undoubtedly give it a high value in the estimation of many is, that it is the most ancient morsel of poetry which the world is in possession of: being three thousand three hundred and thirty-seven years old, that is, six hundred and forty-seven years before Homer, the most ancient and the best of heathen bards, lived or sung. But its antiquity is its flightest excellency. The general turn of it is great, the thoughts nobly simple, the style sublime, the expression strong,
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the pathos sweet, the figures natural and bold. It abounds throughout with images which at once strike, warm, astonish and delight. The occasion of it you well know. The poet's view is to indulge himself in transports of joy, admiration and gratitude, and to inspire the people with the same sentiments. Accordingly he thus impetuously breaks out,

Verse 1. "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Here the tremendous majesty of God the deliverer, and the lively gratitude of the people saved, the leading object of the piece, are placed instantly and powerfully in sight; and they are never dropt for one moment, to the end. *I*, in the singular number, is much more energetic and affecting than *we* in the plural would have been. The triumph of Israel over the Egyptians did not resemble the usual triumphs of nation over nation; where the individual is overlooked and lost in the general. No; every thing here is peculiar and personal. Every Israelite for himself reflects with joy on his own chains now forever broken in pieces. He seems to exult over his own tyrant-master now subdued under him, and hails his personal liberty now effectually secured. For it is natural to the heart of man, in extreme danger, to refer every thing to himself, and to consider himself as all in all. "The *horse* and his rider hath he thrown into the sea:" for the same reason the *horse* is much more forcible than *horses* would have been; it marks strongly the suddenness, the universality, the completeness of the destruction. The Egyptian cavalry, numerous, formidable, covering the face of the ground, is represented in a moment, by a single effort, at one blow, overthrown, overwhelmed, as if they had been but *one* horse and *one* rider.

Verse 2. "JEHOVAH is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." Is it lawful to say, that the poet employs

employs the most exquisite art, in representing this great deliverance, in every part and every view of it, as the work of JEHOVAH: the great “I AM THAT I AM:” that name of GOD, by which he chose to be known to Israel through the whole of those memorable transactions? My *strength*, that is, the source or cause of my strength: and it points out the great GOD as the courage and force of Israel, without the necessity of their exerting any of their own. “*My song*,” that is, the subject of it. No instrument divides the praise with him. No power, no wisdom is employed but his own. He planned, arranged, executed every thing by himself. “*He is become my salvation*.” The fine writers of Greece or Rome would probably have said, “*He hath saved me*.” But Moses says much more; The Lord hath undertaken himself to work deliverance for me: he hath made my salvation his own, his personal concern, and is become to me every thing I can want.

“*He is my God*.” Every word is emphatical. “*He*,” in opposition to the gods of Egypt, which cannot hear, nor see, nor save. “*My God* :” all-attentive to *my* interest and safety, as if he had no creature but *me* to care for: and therefore *my God* : for I acknowledge not, I never will acknowledge, any other. “*My father’s God*.” This repetition is most beautifully tender and pathetic. He whose greatness I adore, is not a strange God, unknown till now; a protector for a moment. No, he is the ancient patron of my family, his goodness is from generation to generation. I have a thousand *domestic* proofs of his constant, undiminished affection; and he is now making good to me only that which he solemnly promised to my *fore-fathers*. And how has he effected this?

“*The LORD is a man of war*.”

An ordinary writer would probably have represented the Almighty here as the God of armies; and as such, discomfiting the host of Pharaoh. But Moses does more; he brings him forth as a champion, a soldier;

dier ; puts the sword into his hand, and exhibits him fighting his battles, the battles of Israel.

The fourth and fifth verses contain a very fine display and amplification of the simple idea suggested in the first, “the *horse* and his *rider*.”

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea : his chosen captains are also drowned in the Red Sea, the depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom as a stone.” Image rises and swells above image. Pharaoh’s *chariots*, his *hosts*, his *chosen captains*—*cast* into the sea, *drowned* in the Red Sea—*covered* with the depths, *sunk* to the bottom, at once, as a *stone*. Notwithstanding their pride and insolence, they can make no more resistance to the power of Jehovah, than a stone launched from the arm of a strong man into the flood.

Every writer but a Moses must have stopped short here ; or flattened his subject, by repeating or extending the same ideas. But the seraphic poet, upborne by an imagination which overleaps the boundaries of the world, and an enthusiasm which cannot rest in any creature, springs up to the Creator himself, in these rapturous strains :

“Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in thy power : thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. In the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee.”

When the heart is full of an object, it turns it round, as it were, on every side, returns to it again and again ; never tires in contemplating it, till admiration is lost in astonishment. Moses after this effusion of joy and praise returns again to the matter of fact : but not in the language of mere description, as in the 4th verse ; but in a continuation of his bold, animated address to God himself ; which gives it a life and fervour superior to any thing human. As if the strength of one element had not been sufficient to destroy God’s enemies, every element

ment lends its aid. The deep opens its mouth, the fire consumes, the wind rages; all nature is up in arms, to avenge the quarrel of an incensed God. The poet ennobles the wind, by making God the principle of it; and animates the fire, by making it susceptible of fear. In the same style of address to God, he throws himself as it were into the person and character of the enemy, previous to their defeat, and pours forth their sentiments of threatening and slaughter; the more strongly to mark their disappointment, by contrasting the folly and impotence of man, with the power and justice of God. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." You see here vengeance hastening to its object, regardless of opposition. The words, unconnected with a conjunction, seem to hurry on like the passion that prompts to them. And in what does it issue? "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them." And the picture is finished with this happy stroke, "They sank as lead in the mighty waters."

But I feel I have undertaken a task far beyond my ability, and the limits of your time. And therefore break off with another borrowed remark, namely, that whatever grandeur and magnificence we may discover in this song, as it stands in such a place and connexion, its beauty and force must greatly rise upon us, were we permitted to penetrate through the mysterious sense concealed behind the veil of this great event. For it is certain, that this deliverance from Egypt covers and represents salvation of a superior and more extensive nature. The apostle of the Gentiles teaches us to consider it as a type of that freedom which the christian obtains by the waters of baptism, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, from the yoke of the prince of this world. And the prophet, in the book of Revelation, makes it to shadow forth the final and great deliverance of the redeemed, by introducing

ducing the assembly of those who have overcome the beast, holding the harps of God in their hands, and singing “ the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints ! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? For thou only art holy ; for all nations shall come and worship before thee ; for thy judgments are made manifest.”* Now, as the scriptures declare that the wonders of this second deliverance shall infinitely surpass the first, and shall entirely obliterate the remembrance of it ; we may easily believe that the beauties of the *spiritual* sense of this divine poem may totally eclipse those of the *historical*.

Having endeavoured imperfectly to unfold some of the excellencies of this ancient sacred composition, I should proceed, as I proposed, to point out the delicacy of attempting, and the difficulty of succeeding, in imitating or extending devotional poetry ; but your time and patience, perhaps, will be better employed in hearing me read to you a short passage, containing the sentiments of an excellent modern critic † on the subject ; with which I shall conclude this exercise.

“ It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship ; and many attempts have been made to, animate devotion by pious poetry. That they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known ; and it may not be improper to inquire why they have miscarried.

“ Let no pious ear be offended, if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may, indeed, be defended in a didactic poem ; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe

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* Rev. xv. 3, 4.

† Dr. Samuel Johnson.

the beauty and grandeur of nature, the flowerst of spring, and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide, and the revolutions of the sky, and praise the Maker for his works, in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety ; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

“ Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human foul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

“ The essence of poetry is invention ; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known ; but few as they are, they can be made no more ; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expreſſion.

“ Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination ; but religion must be shewn as it is ; suppression and addition equally corrupt it ; and such as it is, it is known already.

“ From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension, and elevation of his fancy ; but this is rarely to be hoped for by christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted ; infinity cannot be amplified ; perfection cannot be improved.

“ The employments of pious meditation are faith, thanksgiving, repentance and supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holly effusions, yet addressed to a being without passions, is

is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion, but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

“ Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that verse can do is to help the memory and delight the ear ; and for these purposes it may be very useful ; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament ; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the fideral hemisphere.”

History of Moses.

LECTURE XII.

EXODUS XV. 23—27.

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah ; for they were bitter : therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink ? And he cried unto the Lord ; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet : there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes ; I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians : for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees ; and they encamped there by the waters.

UNLESS the mind be under the regulating power of religion, it will be perpetually losing its balance, and changing its tenor : at one time accelerated into indecent and dangerous speed, through the impulse of desire, ambition or revenge ; at another it is chilled into languor and inaction, through fear, despondency and disappointment. We shall behold the same person now believing things incredible, and attempting things

things impracticable ; and anon staggering at the shadow of a doubt, and shrinking from the slightest appearance of difficulty and danger. Insolent, fierce and overbearing in prosperity, the unsteady creature becomes grovelling, dispirited, and mean in adversity. “ It is a good thing,” therefore, “ that the heart be established by grace :” grace, that calm, steady, uniform principle, which veers not with every wind of doctrine ; rises not, nor falls, like the Mercury in the tube, with every variation of the atmosphere, according to the alternate transition of disappointment and success, censure and applause, health and sickness, youth and age. In the day of prosperity, religion faith to the soul where it dwells, “ Rejoice,” and in the day of adversity, “ Consider ;” for a wise and a merciful God hath set the one over against the other. This divine principle corrects immoderate joy, saying to the happy, “ Be not high minded, but fear ;” it consoles and supports the miserable, by breathing the sweet assurance, that the “ light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”*

The want of this balance of the soul, and the dangerous consequences of that want, are strikingly exemplified in the history of the chosen people, whom Providence by a series of miracles undertook to conduct from Egypt to Canaan. Elated or depressed by the aspect of the moment, we find them haughty in the hour of victory, and sunk into despair by a defeat. The *deepness* of the waters of the Red Sea, and their miraculous separation, afford matter of triumph to-day ; the *bitterness* of the waters of Marah causes universal discontent and dejection to-morrow. But alas ! we need not recur to distant periods of history for an example of the ruinous effects produced by a destitution of religious principle, and of the fatal power of unbelief. The history of every man’s own experience is illustration sufficient. To what must we ascribe the envy,

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

envy, jealousy, rage, pride, resentment, timidity, diffidence and dejection, which successively and unremittingly agitate the human mind? Men walk by sight, not by faith. They feel the powers of the world that *is*, and are insensible of that which is to come. They look at “things temporal,” and neglect those “which are unseen and eternal.” They stand in awe of the creature, and despise the Creator. While then we discover, deplore and condemn a selfish, a perverse and discontented spirit, and an unbelieving heart, in others, let us study, by the grace of God, to reform the same or like dispositions in ourselves.

What a magnificent concert filled the shores of the Red Sea, after Israel was passed over! Every thing was suited to another. The words were adapted to the occasion, the music to the words, the performers to the music. There Moses, leading the bolder, rougher notes of manly voices; here Miriam the prophetess, his sister, in sweet accord, blending the softer harmony of female strains with the notes of the timbrel, in praise of their great Deliverer. Never surely did such music strike the vault of heaven, and never shall again, “till the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away:”* never, till the song of Moses be closed with the song of the Lamb.

At length they quit the scene of their terror and of their triumph; for the world admits not of a long continuance of either; and they advance three days march into the wilderness. Escaped effectually and forever from the oppression of Egypt, no more opposed in front by an unsurmountable barrier, nor hemmed in on either side by impassable mountains, nor pursued by a numerous and well-disciplined army; but the sea, once their hindrance, now their defence; every foe subdued, and the road to Canaan straight

* *Isai. xxxv. 10.*

before them, what can now give disturbance? On how many circumstances does life and the comfort of it depend! The failure or disagreeable quality of one ingredient corrupts and destroys the whole. In Shur they found *no* water; in Marah they find water, but it is *bitter*. The unavoidable condition of a wilderness state! Always too little, or too much! Here there are children and penury; there affluence and sterility. This year there is drought parching and consuming every plant of the field; the next, an overflowing flood sweeping every thing before it; and unhappy mortals are eternally augmenting the necessary and unavoidable evils of human life, by peevishness and discontent.

Oblige an ungrateful person ever so often, and disappoint or oppose him once, and lo, the memory of a thousand benefits is instantly lost. All that Moses, all that God has done for Israel is forgotten, the moment that a scarcity of water is felt. For it is with this spirit as with that of ambition: nothing *is* attained in the eye of ambition, while there is yet one thing *to be* attained. All the favour of Ahasuerus avails Haman nothing, while Mordecai the Jew sits in the king's gate. So ingratitude says nothing is granted, while one thing is denied me. One scanty meal in Shur, or one unpalatable beverage at Marah, has obliterated all remembrance of the recent wonders of Egypt, and the more recent miracles of the Red Sea. And as one evil quality is ever found in company with its fellows, we here find ingratitude and impiety toward God blended with unkindness and unreasonableness toward man. And cowardice pitifully levels its keen arrows at the servant, not daring to attack the master. "The people murmured against Moses." A worldly mind under distress either flies to the creature for help, or accuses the creature as the cause of its woe. Piety leads the soul directly to God; it views the calamity as his appointment; and finds its removal, its remedy, or its compensation in the divine mercy. Israel tastes the

the bitter water, despends, and charges Moses foolishly. Moses cries to God, and is enlightened.

Observe the goodness and long-suffering of God. Readier to listen to the entreaties of Moses than to punish the perverseness and unbelief of the people, he instantly directs to a cure for the nitrous quality of the waters of Marah. "The Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Of little consequence is it to inquire, because it is impossible to determine, whether the wood of this tree had in it an inherent virtue which naturally corrected the brackish taste of the water ; or, whether the sweetening quality were preternaturally communicated to it to fulfil the present design of Providence. Whether I see water sweetened by a log of wood cast into it, or issuing from the flinty rock, or flowing naturally in the brook ; whether I see Israel fed with bread from heaven, or Moses and Christ subsisting forty days without bread at all ; or mankind in general supported by bread growing gradually out of the ground ; I still behold but one and the same object ; " good gifts coming down" but in so many different ways "from the Father of lights." The wise man, in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, has made a happy use of this passage, to inculcate the necessity of using appointed means in order to obtain success. The Lord (says he) hath created medicines out of the earth, and he that is wise will not abhor them. Was not the water made sweet with wood, that the virtue thereof might be known ? and he hath given men skill, that he might be honoured in his marvellous works. With such doth he heal men, and taketh away their pains. My son, in thy sickness be not negligent ; but pray unto the Lord, and he will make thee whole."

A fondness for allegory has represented the effect produced by this tree cast into the waters, as emblematical of the virtue of the cross, in sweetening and sanctifying affliction to the believer, and taking the

sting out of death. Undoubtedly, when an object so important and a doctrine so instructive can by whatever means be impressed upon the heart, we ought not too squeamishly to reject applications and illustrations of this sort. In order to promote the ends of true piety, what though we relax a little of the laws of rigid criticism? If imagination serve as an handmaid to virtue and devotion, let men be as fanciful as they will. If a serious soul be edified or comforted, shall I mar his joy and disturb his tranquillity by forcing him to comprehend the meaning of Greek and Hebrew particles? Whether it be warrantable or not to give this evangelical turn to the passage before us, its moral intention and import will hardly be disputed. It exhibits the reluctance which men feel to encounter affliction, their impatience and unreasonableness under it, the wise design of Providence in afflictive dispensations, namely to "prove men, whether they will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord their God, and do that which is right in his sight." And finally, it illustrates the power, wisdom and goodness of God in counteracting one natural evil, by another evil; making poison serve as an antidote to poison, and healing the greater plague of sin by the less, that of suffering.

Some commentators have conjectured, that it was about this very spot that Hagar was relieved and supplied with water, she and her son, by the angel of the Lord, when they were banished from Abraham's house; and they reprove the incredulity of the Israelites by the example of her faith. After all, it was undoubtedly a very severe trial; whether we consider how much water, sweet water, is connected, not merely with the convenience and comfort, but with the very existence of human life; the immense quantity necessary for the support of such a vast multitude of men and women, besides cattle; or the peculiar demand occasioned by a vertical sun and a parched soil. We pass on from Marah as men, and as the inhabitants of more favoured regions, praising God, "who walks upon the

the clouds," and refreshes us from heaven above; gushes upon us in a thousand streams of limpid comfort from the earth beneath, and gently flows through every field in a tide of delight; and as christians we flee for refuge and refreshment to that *wonderful Man*, described in prophetic vision in such beautiful figures as these; "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."* Gold, silver, and precious stones, are produced in small quantities, and are of difficult and dangerous investigation. And happily the life of man consists not in such things as these. Whereas the things which really minister to human comfort, and constitute the real support of human life, are poured down upon us with unbounded profusion. The choicest blessing which ever was bestowed upon the world, is common and free to all as the water in the stream, as the light and air of heaven.

But though the bitter waters are sweetened for present use, Israel must not think of continuing encamped by them. They are to be but the transient refreshment of the way-faring man, not the stated supply of the land of promise. Whatever we have attained, whatever we enjoy, the voice of Providence still summons us away, saying, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest."

Their next journeying is from Marah to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters." In the preceding station, their provision was partly from nature, partly from the kindness of a gracious Providence. Nature furnished the substance, a miracle endowed it with the suitable qualities. But at Elim, nature seems to do the whole, with her "threescore and ten palm-trees, and twelve wells of water." And what is nature, but the great JEHOVAH performing the most astonishing wonders in a stated and

* Isaiah xxxii. 2.

and regular course? Water issuing from a rock when smitten by a rod, is not in itself a whit more miraculous than the continually supplying one little stream from the same spring. Being arrived at Elim, they encamped “by the waters.” The word “Elim” standing in our version untranslated, is generally considered as the proper name of a place; but it is by some, and with a great appearance of reason, rendered, “*the forests.*” This is supported by a passage of Strabo,* the famous geographer and historian of Cappadocia, to this purpose; that “at five days journey from Jericho there is a forest of palm-trees, which is held in great veneration throughout all that country, on account of the springs of water which are found there in great abundance.” The numbers *twelve* and *seventy* in the sacred text, instead of signifying a determinate quantity, may undoubtedly denote indefinitely according to a license common in all languages, a large abundance. And then the account of Strabo, and the narration of Moses, will mutually confirm and strengthen each other. Two writers of no less eminence and credit than Tacitus† and Plutarch,‡ plainly allude to this passage, when they say that “the Jews, being ready to perish with thirst, happily discovered springs of running water.”

But, instead of settling the geography of the spot, and the import of the word Elim, let us look into the fact recorded, and through it into the volume of human nature. “They encamped there by the waters.” The self-same spirit which murmured at the taste of a bitter stream, disposed them to seek repose by the side of one that was sweet and placid. Mistaken in both, a carnal mind is easily unhinged and soon satisfied. Like children, they are put out of humour with a straw, and presently pacified they know not why; and behold unbelief lying at the root of both one and the other.

* Lib. xvi. † Hist. Lib. V.

‡ Tom. II. Sympof. Lib. IV.

other. Now, eager to get home before the time ; by and by drowning all thoughts and hopes of it in the bauble of the present hour. See Israel at one time disconcerted and chagrined to find that the wilderness did not produce every thing to a wish ; at another, ready to forego the prospect of Canaan for Egypt, and to accept the land of dates and water for that flowing with milk and honey. Never did any good come of sitting down contentedly in temporal possessions. No sooner do men become easy and comfortable in their circumstances, than they grow capricious and fantastical in their wishes and desires. If Providence visit them not with scarcity, or unpleasantness of water ; their own restless appetite shall visit them with an absurd and unreasonable craving for flesh. The fruit and shade of the palm-tree, and the deliciousness of a fresh spring, please not long. Put an end to novelty, and farewell delight. But a month and fourteen days have elapsed, since with so much joy they quitted the house of bondage : and they are weak and wicked enough to wish themselves thither again. And why ? because, in a march of a few short weeks at most, through a wild and desert country, they wallowed not in the profusion of Egypt, which they were obliged to purchase at the price of their liberty and blood.

When we hear of such an universal mutiny, for it was not the murmuring of a few factious discontented spirits, but of the whole congregation of Israel, what have we not to fear from the just resentment of a holy and righteous God, thus insulted by mistrust and unbelief ? We find him immediately taking up the cause, and, in a manner peculiar to himself. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth. “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold I will rain”—what ? Fire and brimstone from heaven, upon this generation of incorrigible rebels, until they be utterly consumed ? No but “ I will rain bread from heaven upon you.” Is this thy manner with men, O Lord God ? Surely, “ it

“ it is of thy mercy we are not consumed, because thy compassions fail not.”

The historical fact which follows, as the accomplishment of this promise, is one of the most singular upon record ; and so mixes itself with the leading objects of the New Testament dispensation, that it well merits a separate and particular consideration.

Being arrived at another of the great epochas, or periods of ancient history, the going out of Egypt ; we shall make a brief recapitulation of the whole, from the beginning. The first great period of the history of the world, is from the creation down to the deluge ; containing the space of one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years ; and a succession of eight lives, from Adam, to the six hundredth year of Noah. The second is, from the flood to the calling of Abraham, and contains four hundred and twenty-seven years ; and a succession of ten lives, from the hundred and eighth year of Shem, the son of Noah, to the seventy-fifth of Abraham, the father and founder of the Jewish nation : six of the patriarchs, after the flood, being now dead, Noah, Phaleg, Rehu, Serug, Nahor, and Terah ; and four of them still living, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, and Heber. So that one life, that of Shem, connects the antediluvian world, and the call of Abraham. For he was ninety-eight years old before the flood came ; and lived till Abraham was one hundred and fifty, and Isaac fifty years old. The third grand period of the world, containing four hundred and thirty years, commences on the fifteenth day of the month Abib, which answers to the end of our April, or the beginning of May. And some learned chronologists have undertaken to prove, from the scripture history and astronomical calculations, that Abraham departed from Haran, the paschal lamb was sacrificed in Egypt, and Christ expired upon the cross, as the propitiation for the sins of the world, on Calvary, in the identical month of the year, day of the month, and hour and minute of the day. This period

riod contains a succession of seven lives, including Abraham's, from his seventy-fifth year to the eightieth of the life of Moses.

From the creation, then, to the exodus, is the space of two thousand five hundred and thirteen years, and a succession of twenty-four lives. The date of this event, in relation to other important and well known events in the history of mankind, stands as follows: it happened after the death of Abraham, three hundred and thirty years. After the death of Isaac, two hundred and twenty-five. After the death of Jacob, one hundred and ninety-eight. After the death of Joseph, one hundred and forty-four. Before the destruction of Troy, about three hundred. Before the first Olympiad, or the earliest reckoning of time among the Greeks, seven hundred and fourteen. Before the building of the temple, when the Israelitish glory was in its zenith, five hundred and six. Before the Babylonish captivity, nine hundred and sixty-three. Before the building of Rome, seven hundred and thirty-eight. Before Christ was born at Bethlehem, one thousand five hundred fifty-one. Before the present year 1793, three thousand three hundred and forty-four.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? "A thousand years," O Lord, "in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."* "Our fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live forever?" "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."† "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."‡ "Many shall come from the east and

* Psal. xc. 4.

† 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12, 13.

‡ Psal. xc. 12.

and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”* “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”† “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”‡

* Mat. viii. 11.

† John i. 17.

‡ Rev. xxii. 20.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XIII.

EXODUS XVI. 11—15.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel ; speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread : and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp : and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna : for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

MAN, composed of body and spirit, is giving continual indication of the origin from which he springs. His creative imagination, his penetrating understanding, his quickness of apprehension, loftiness of thought, eagerness of desire, fondness of hope ; nay, even his erect figure, and a countenance turned upward to the skies, bespeak him the son of God, into whose nostrils Jehovah has breathed the breath of life, and whom he has framed after his own image. On the other hand, appetites perpetually craving a supply out of the earth ; the law of his nature, which stretches him in a state of insensibility upon the lap of his mother,

mother, for one third of his existence, in order to support the employments of the other two ; and rational powers subjected to the will of sense, shew us a creature taken *from* the dust of the ground, always dependent upon it, and hastening to return thitherward again.

Providence permits us not for a moment to forget who and whence we are. Have we laboured an hour or two ? Hunger and thirst and weariness irresistibly draw us to the grosser elements of which we are compounded. A little bread and water having dispensed their nourishing virtue, a short sleep having restored our wasted powers, the soul starts up into conscious immortality, it springs forward to eternity, grasps the globe, expatiates from sphere to sphere, ascends to the throne of God himself. At one time, we behold a grovelling contemptible being, all body, absorbed in the low and gross desire of the moment, a fit companion to the beasts that perish ; and anon we see that very same wretched creature becoming all spirit, leaving the earth behind him, mixing with angels, and holding fellowship with the Father of spirits.

Religion is constantly aiming at the restoration of our fallen nature, is still exerting her quickening power to raise the beastial into rational, the rational into divine ; she graciously employs herself in gradually detaching us from things seen and temporal, and in uniting us to those which are unseen and are eternal. The world, on the contrary, is as constantly striving to degrade, to depress, to extinguish the immortal principle, and to sink the man in the brute. Hence we see the worldling dreaming of much goods laid up for many years, endeavouring to confer duration even upon his sensuality ; while Christ teacheth his disciples to pray, saying, “ Give us *this* day our daily bread.” And by this admonition, he powerfully checks immoderate anxiety about the future. “ Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for

for your body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"*

To teach men their constant dependence, their provision is bestowed in a gradual, daily supply; not in heaps but in handfuls. And when God was pleased miraculously to feed Israel in the wilderness for forty years together, the food of every day came in its day. All attempts to hoard were defeated. Every one's portion was sufficiently ample; and accumulation became a nuisance instead of wealth.

Men, under the impulse of their passions sluggishly crawl, or eagerly run to the objects of their pursuit; but God is ever advancing towards his in the same steady, majestic pace. When we hear of the birth of Moses, the deliverer of Israel, we immediately conclude that the time of their redemption is now at hand. But behold forty years elapse before a single effort is made for this purpose. And, it is then the feeble effort of a solitary individual to avenge a private wrong; while the general enfranchisement seems rather retarded than accelerated by it; and another period of forty years passes, without one apparent step taken towards public liberty. The fetters of Egypt are at length broken, and Israel is enlarged; but the possession of Canaan is still at a distance; and a third space of forty years consumes that whole generation in the wilderness; and Moses, their conductor, dies at the age of one hundred and twenty years, before the sole of one foot enters into the land of promise, as a possession. So unlike are the preconceptions of erring men to the designs of the infinitely wise God.

When we behold that vast congregation, by such a display of Omnipotence rescued from bondage, conducted

* Matt. vi. 25, 26.

ducted through the Red Sea, made to triumph over all their enemies, we are apt to consider them as the favourites of Heaven, destined to personal honours and possessions. But the event teaches us to correct our hasty judgment, and instructs us that not the particular interests of individuals, but the great interests of the church of God, are the care of Heaven ; that, though Aaron and his sons may die, the priesthood ever lives ; and that while prophet after prophet retires, it is only to make room for the Prince and Lord of all the prophets.

Of little consequence is it to obtain possession of expected good, unless we be fitted for the enjoyment of it. A nation of slaves was unqualified to exercise the rights and to enjoy the privileges of citizens. Israel had no existence in Egypt but merely a natural one. They had no civil constitution, no laws, no government. To have been conducted directly to Canaan in such a state had been the reverse of a benefit. Providence therefore thought proper to employ a series of years in the wilderness, in training the people for empire, in modelling a government suitable to their future condition, and by enacting wise laws, respecting both religion and civil polity, prepared them for that exalted rank which they were to hold among the nations ; and that duration of power and importance, with which the salvation of the whole human race was so closely connected. Thus the eternal decree makes the possession of the heavenly Canaan sure to every heir of glory ; which decree, the justifying grace and adopting love of his heavenly Father declare and confirm ; but he is not brought home to his Father's house above, till through the school of discipline, and by the Spirit of holiness, he is “ made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Men, through impatience and peevishness, miss the very end at which they aim. Canaan flies but the farther off, from being grasped at too soon. The homely provision

provision brought from Egypt was now spent ; the milk and honey of Canaan were not yet bestowed. The wilderness naturally produced nothing for food, hardly water to quench their thirst. The wonders of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah, all, all is forgotten the moment distress comes upon them. " And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." God immediately takes up the cause as his own ; but instead of expressing the resentment of an insulted sovereign and benefactor, declares his gracious resolution to overcome this ungracious spirit, by compliance and kindness ; and men, unworthy of the meanest earthly fare, have a promise of a daily supply of bread from heaven. But as God does not always withhold in displeasure, so he does not always grant from love. When Providence designs to indulge the humours and gratify the lusts of men, it is far, very far from being a token for good. A promise of bread in the morning is precious information ; but the addition of flesh to the full in the evening wears rather the appearance of a threatening. When our desires exceed the bounds of wisdom, the accomplishment, not the disappointment of them, becomes our punishment.

It is remarkable too, that the luxurious part of their demand was granted before that which was necessary. The quails came in the evening ; the manna appeared not till the next morning. Another proof, that the supply granted flowed not from unmixed affection.

Without going at present into any of the critical inquiries which have been pursued, respecting either the name or the nature of this wonderful bread, we proceed to make a few practical observations upon it, founded upon the letter of the history, as it stands in our bible.

First. Then and then only is faith warranted to expect relief from a miracle, when means have been tried

tried without effect ; or, when we are in such a situation, that no means can be used with a probability of success. If God in his providence has brought us into the wilderness, where no corn can grow, where no water flows, we may reasonably look for an interposition from above for our support, which we should expect in vain in a land of corn and vineyards. Where there is a field for the exercise of foresight, industry and diligence, we tempt God instead of honouring him, when we cast our work, and not our care, upon him. And yet it is not uncommon to see a listless, indolent disposition, wanting to pass itself for reliance on the goodness of Heaven. Herod desired to see Christ merely in the view of gratification to an idle curiosity in hope of seeing a miracle performed ; but his motive being wrong and unworthy, his desire was not indulged. The Pharisees, from a captious, unbelieving spirit, tempted Christ, " asking a sign from heaven ;" but though signs innumerable were every day exhibited in compassion to the miserable and condescension to the weak, no sign but that " of the prophet Jonas," was given to the self-conceited infidel. JEHOVAH performs the wonders of his power and goodness, neither to save the exertions of the lazy, nor to tickle the imaginations of the curious. His object is not to make men stare and wonder, but to do them good.

Secondly. Man's happiest estate is to feel his daily, constant dependence upon his Maker, and to see the regular promised supply evincing the truth and faithfulness of its bountiful Author. With a monitor for God pressing in upon us through every avenue of the soul, we are nevertheless apt to be inattentive and unthankful. It is therefore an instance of great goodness, when God is pleased to force himself upon our thoughts, and to invite us to communion with " the Father of our spirits," in the commerce of a constant habitual friendship. Here then the poor have infinitely the advantage over the rich. They see, or they

they are blind indeed, they see their “ dry morsel and their dinner of herbs,” coming at the expected hour from the bounty of indulgent Heaven. They are not suffered to be careless, impious and ungrateful. Their homely fare is garnished and seasoned with what gold cannot purchase, nor power compel, the gentle whispers of a Father’s love, the kindly welcome of an affectionate friend. And yet the bulk of mankind is striving and straining to get out of this happy state ; eagerly catching at a situation which would infallibly betray them into self-sufficiency, infolence and irreligion. That proud word, *independence*, is continually in their mouths, and the thing itself is in their hearts ; not considering, that the real happiness of man consists in mutual connexion and dependence, and that the glory and felicity of every rational being is founded upon union with, and a sense of his constant and entire dependence on his Creator.

Thirdly. No fulness and no excellency of created comforts will produce real happiness to rational beings, without the aid of religion. During the abode of Israel in Egypt, the observance of the sabbath had been greatly neglected, if not altogether disused. The religious principle of course must have been much weakened, if not wholly destroyed. There was nothing done, then, till this matter was re-established. For there can be no good government but what is founded upon religion ; and religion cannot long exist in any degree of either fervour or purity, where no attention is paid to the Lord’s day. Providence, therefore, employed a certain method to point out that day to Israel, and to enforce the observance of it. On that day no manna fell. But, to compensate the failure, a double quantity was given the day before ; and the manna of that day, contrary to its usual custom, retained its sweetnes during the sabbath : it neither melted away, nor became putrid. But, alas ! long disuse had so much diminished public respect for the ordinance, that a discipline of forty years is scarcely sufficient to restore it

it to its ancient dignity and estimation. The restraints of religion are no encroachments on human liberty. "The sabbath was made for man," a season of rest for his body; a season of contemplation for his mind. It was intended to be his comfort, as a citizen of this world; and his condition as a candidate for another country, that is, an heavenly, is closely connected with it. Can the great God be honoured by our resting from the usual employments of life for a seventh part of our time? Surely not: but God is honoured and glorified, when man is made wise, good and happy.

Fourthly. The folly and perverseness of men exhibit a melancholy contrast to the wisdom and goodness of God. The promise of the Almighty gave full assurance of a daily, certain, stated supply. But either through mistrust at one time they attempt to hoard up to-morrow's provision from the superabundance of to-day; or, through impiety at another, they violate the divine appointment, by going out to gather on that day when they were expressly assured they needed to expect none. Thus we are always doing too little or too much; impatiently and impetuously outrunning Providence, or sluggishly and carelessly lagging behind. And what do we get to ourselves, in either case, but disappointment and dishonour? The man who dissently laboured to accumulate for five days of the week, when he looks upon his store, finds he has been treasuring up to himself nothing but stench and putrefaction; and the Israelite who presumptuously trusted his sabbath-day's entertainment to the manna of that day, must fast for his folly.

Fifthly. Observe the care of Providence to preserve among this highly favoured people a constant sense of their equality. All had their constant supply; every one was entitled to his fair proportion; and no good purpose did it answer to grasp at a double portion. For the hand which miraculously rained down this heavenly bread, miraculously modified it to every one's use. "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he that

that gathered little had no lack." Now if we attend to the conduct of Providence to this day, and in every state of the world, we shall find the same equality of distribution still going on. A man has just what he uses and no more. With a chest full of gold, he has a desire to eat but twice or thrice a day at most. With a thousand suits of apparel in his wardrobe, he can use but one at a time. His neighbour, therefore, who has but one dinner, and one coat at once, is, upon the whole, just as rich as he. Beyond what nature requires, reason approves, and the Almighty crowns with his blessing, all is childish and fantastical. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."* If this were felt and understood as it ought, we should see less eagerness, rapacity and selfishness in one part of mankind, and less unthankfulness and discontent in another.

Sixthly. Mark the danger of giving way to a light, wanton, fanciful disposition. Even manna pleased not long. An imagination filled with the luxurious dainties of Egypt, soon spurned at it, as "light bread." There is no end to wishing and desiring. Unadulterated nature craves but little, and is not difficult to please. But once give the reins to fancy, and the wealth of Crœsus, the magnificence of Solomon, the elegance of Lucullus, and the luxury of Heliogabalus, will soon stink and be despised. Men ate angels' food, and loathed it. Of what importance then must it be, to check in ourselves, and to repress in those whose virtue and happiness are entrusted to our care, the first workings of a wild and fantastical appetite. Children cannot be too simply clothed and fed. Solicit the palate by delicacies, and you kindle a fire in the imagination to which no wealth can administer a sufficient supply of fuel, which no reason can keep within bounds, which will certainly produce a thousand real evils, and render the possession of the real felicities of

life tasteless and insipid. Teach young ones to value themselves on dress and appearance, and you undermine the fabric of their true consequence. In proportion as you lead them to derive their importance from the adorning of their bodies, you strip and expose their minds.

Seventhly. The same Power which corrupted the manna on the second day, and which preserved it from corruption every seventh day, commanded a small portion to be laid up, for a memorial to future generations ; and for that purpose miraculously kept it in its original state of sweetness and perfection. In this we see the absolute subjection of all things to the will of God. They grow and decay, they continue and pass away, they live and perish, just as he will. “I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.” “And, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” No power nor skill can redeem the body from the power of the grave ; the arm of an archangel is unable to confine it there.

Finally. The manna from heaven is likewise an image of better things to come. The bread of angels could not confer immortality on those who did eat it : but “the true bread which came down from heaven,” communicates eternal life to all who partake of it. But the words of our Saviour himself will best explain this subject. “Jesus saith unto them, I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever ; and the bread

bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you. Who so eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."*

Having thus finished the Course of Lectures proposed for this season,† what remains, but that with a grateful heart I first acknowledge the great goodness of Almighty God, who has graciously lent health and strength for carrying on this undertaking thus far. If any favour of divine things has been felt, or communicated; if scripture truth has, to any, been set in a new or an agreeable light; if a taste for sacred reading and meditation has been conveyed; if the connexion between the Old and New Testament has been pointed out, and impressed upon any heart; and, if the young

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* John vi. 47, &c.

† For the reason assigned, when these discourses were first submitted to the public eye, some of the occasional addresses from the pulpit were retained in the publication. But the Lectures of a season not corresponding exactly to the usual size of a volume, it became at length a matter of doubt, whether these addresses should be altogether suppressed, modelled into a more proper diction and station from the press, or given exactly in the order and words in which they were delivered. The doubt issued in resolving upon the last. This Lecture concluded the Course of the Spring, 1783. The Course of the ensuing season commenced with that which follows. Perhaps it was unnecessary to say so much, in explanation of a matter so little important as the conclusion of one discourse and the introduction to another,

in particular have been induced, by any thing said in this place, to think for themselves, and to compare spiritual things with spiritual ;—the Lecturer has gained his end, and is already in possession of his reward. The praise he cheerfully renders to Him to whom it belongs.

To you, my very dear friends, my thanks are in the next place unquestionably due, and are rendered with unfeigned gratitude. Your patient attendance and candid attention, during seven months together, I shall ever consider as a proof of attachment the most flattering and the most encouraging. Why should I conceal my feelings on the occasion ? I engaged in this undertaking, at first, with fear and trembling ; I proceeded with solicitude ; but I conclude with heart-felt satisfaction ; because the countenance I have met with encourages me to hope that my labours may have been doing some good. If there be one circumstance which gives me pain, it is the excess of that liberality and approbation which has so far over-rated and over-paid my endeavours, to convey to you useful and pleasing instruction. In return, all I can do, is to wish and pray that your kindness may be returned a thousand fold into your bosoms, in temporal, spiritual and heavenly blessings. And now, my beloved brethren, farewell. To the grace of God I commend you all : even, “ to Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ; even to the only wise God our Saviour.”* That we shall never all meet again in an earthly temple, is certain. For time is hastening to silence the tongue of the preacher, and to close the hearer’s ear. But we have everlasting consolation and good hope, through grace, of meeting together, and of worshipping in that temple, “ which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved

* Jude 24, 25.

saved shall walk in the light of it ; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day ; for there shall be no night there.”* Let us, therefore, “ be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.”†

* Rev. xxi. 23, 24, 25.

† 1 Cor. xv. 58.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XIV.

EXODUS xvii. 1, 2,—5, 6.

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water, that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

THE reconciliation of interrupted friendship is one of the chief delights of human life. The extatic pleasure of meeting again, after long absence, persons whom we dearly love, obliterates in a moment the pain of separation: and one hour of sweet communication compensates the languor, solicitude, and gloom of many years. After an interval of five months, I return, to converse with Moses, and to talk of him to you, with the satisfaction of one who has been upon a long journey, and, returning home, finds again those whom

whom he left, those whom he loves ; and finds them such as he wishes them to be. Let us, my dear friends, with increased ardour, affection, admiration and gratitude, renew our intimacy with the venerable man to whom we are indebted for so much rational pleasure, and for so much useful instruction. Moses, thou prince of historians, sublimest of poets, sagest of legislators, clearest-sighted of prophets, most amiable of men ! To thee we owe our knowledge of the ages beyond the flood ! Thou first taughtest to string the sacred lyre, and to adapt the high praises of God to the enchanting concord of sweet sounds. By thee, king in Jeshurun, all succeeding princes have been instructed how to govern ; and lawgivers are formed to political wisdom and sagacity. By thee, Jews were led to expect, and Gentiles are encouraged to rejoice in **MESSIAH**, the great prophet, after thy similitude ; by whom alone thou art excelled. And by thee, sweetest, meekest, gentlest of mankind, the endearing charities of private life are most engagingly exemplified, and most powerfully recommended.

But chiefly thee, O Spirit ! thee only, we adore,

“ Who didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning, how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos.”

Whatever wisdom we may have learned, whatever pleasure we may have enjoyed, whatever comfort we possess, whatever hope we feel—all, all is of thee, pure, eternal, unchanging source of light and life and joy.

Moses, in the passage of his writings which I have now read, is carrying on his own interesting, eventful history. At the head of the myriads of Israel, he is now pursuing his march from Egypt to Canaan, following a guide who would not mislead them, and whom they could not mistake ; protected by a power, which, like a wall of fire, bid defiance to every threatening foe ; and from day to day supplied by a bounty incapable of being exhausted. All these present and

and singular advantages, had the sweetness of hope mingled with them. They had just escaped from the most humiliating and oppressive of all servitude, and they were hastening to the inheritance of their fathers: yet we find them a people as peevish, irritable, and difficult to please, as if they had never known adversity, and as if they had just issued from the lap of ease and indulgence. To day, the bread is dry and stale; to-morrow, the water is bitter; the third day, there is a scarcity of it. The water is sweetened; manna descends; quails fall around their camp; but there is still "a cruel something unpossessed," and all that went before is forgotten; all that is in possession becomes insipid. Bestow on the ungrateful person nine hundred and ninety-nine favours, and withhold the thousandth, and all you have done for him is lost. The present pressure always seems the heaviest. Mouldy bread and brackish water in the wilderness, are considered as evils more intolerable than all the rigours of slavery in Egypt.

Where does this censure fall? On that moody murmuring race, the Jews, and on them only? Alas! it overwhelms ourselves; it bears hard, not upon individuals here and there, but upon mankind! We expect more from the world than it possibly can bestow; and, when we discover its insufficiency, we charge God foolishly; and because we have not every thing that we wish, we are satisfied with nothing. Solacing ourselves, like Jonah, under the shadow of a gourd, we fancy it is a perennial shelter. We see not the worm which is gnawing its root; and when it is smitten down and withers, we are ready to say, with the sullen, testy prophet, "We do well to be angry."

But, was the want of water a slight evil? And, is it sinful to complain under the pressure of a calamity like this? And, was this the *first* time Israel had been in distress, and found relief? Who was it that sweetened the waters of Marah? Who divided the Red Sea? Who rained bread from heaven? And, who ever mended

mended his condition by murmuring and discontent? Had God intended to destroy that people, why all this exertion of a strong hand, and stretched-out arm to deliver them? God in the failure of our earthly comforts intends not our mortification and ruin, but our wisdom and improvement. He thereby teaches us our dependence; it summons us to the observation of his providence; and levels, not the hope and joy, but the pride and self-sufficiency of man.

Water! precious fluid! infinitely more valuable than the blood of the grape, than rivulets of oil, or honey from the rock; refreshed, sustained every moment by thee, we are every moment wasting, neglecting, forgetting thee. We prize thee not, because of thy rich abundance; and, because thou enterest into every other mean of food and comfort, thy importance is unobserved, thy benefits forgotten. May I never know thy value from the want of thee.

“There was no water for the people to drink.” Wherefore the people did chide with “Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?” If in their calmest moments men are often incapable of reasoning justly, and distinguishing accurately, is it any wonder to find them, in the very tide and whirlwind of passion, acting foolishly and unreasonably? Who would envy pre-eminence such as that which Moses enjoyed? Is glory obtained? He comes in but for a moderate share. Is blame incurred, or distress felt? All is imputed to him. To what a severe trial was the temper of this meekest of all men now put! What so provoking as to meet with censure when we are conscious of meriting praise? What so galling as to have the calamities of others charged upon us as crimes; to be accused as culpable, merely because we have been unfortunate? Surely the great are set in “slipperiness

pery places ;" and "uneasy must the head lie that wears a crown."

We see Moses flying in the hour of danger, whither the people ought to have fled in the hour of their affliction. "He cried unto the Lord." Religion opens a refuge when every other refuge fails ; and it administers a remedy to ills otherwise incurable. I tremble for the life of Moses. He trembles for himself, "They are almost ready to stone me." The voice of Jehovah is again heard, and Moses is in safety. But I tremble now, for these murmuring, unbelieving, rebellious Israelites : Is not the thunder of His indignation going to burst out ? Is not the fire hastening to consume ? Or, is the earth going to open her mouth, and swallow them quick up into the pit ? Behold a solemn preparation is making ! But it is an arrangement of love. It is the voice of God I hear : but it speaks mercy and peace. The tremendous rod of God, wherewith he bruised and broke Egypt, is again employed ; but not as the instrument of punishment to Israël. It smites, not a sinful people, but the flinty rock ; and it draws forth, not a stream of blood from the heart of the offender, but a stream of water to cool his tongue, and to restore his fainting soul. Surely, O Lord, "thy ways are not as our ways : for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy ways higher than our ways, and thy thoughts than our thoughts."* "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity ; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."† Astonishing instance of the power and sovereignty of the Most High ! The same rod which smote the river, and it became blood, smites the rock, and it becomes streams of water. Who is to be feared, who is to be trusted, but the God who can do these great things ?

How honourable had it been for Israel, to have had this stage of their marching through the wilderness, distinguished

* Isa. li. 8, 9.

† Rom. xi. 22.

distinguished by a name which betokened and commemorated their faithfulness, obedience and submission. Instead of this, the names *Masrah* and *Meribah*, must transmit to all generations the memory of *temptation*, *chiding* and *strife*. Happily the monuments of human frailty, folly and guilt, are also the monuments of the divine patience, forbearance and tender mercy. "But the law had only a shadow of good things to come." Where Moses leaves us, Isaiah takes us by the hand, and leads us on our way, pointing to Him whom all prophecy revealed, and saying, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."* And the apostle of the Gentiles conducts our weary wandering steps from the rock in Horeb to the rock Christ, from whence issues the mighty " river, which makes glad the city of our God;" and which affords, not a transitory, temporary refreshment, but a perpetual never-failing supply. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ."† The words of the apostle insinuate, that the stream which issued from the rock in the wilderness continued to flow, and accompanied their progress through the desert during the remainder of their long pilgrimage, till, being arrived at the land of promise, a land watered with the dew of heaven, and the abundance of the rivers, a miraculous supply being unnecessary, was withdrawn.

Thus was the gospel preached to them of old time. The solid rock became, as it were, moveable; "and followed.

* Isa. xxxii. 1, 2.

† 1 Cor. x. 1, &c.

followed them" wheresoever they went. The adamant was melted into a pool for their refreshment. Blessed type of Him who in his own person accommodated the immutability of the divine nature to the necessity and the relief of human misery ! Blessed type of that stream of blood flowing from the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and " which taketh away the sins of the world !" Blessed type of that " consolation that is in Christ Jesus" for the weary and heavy laden, for the guilty and the wretched, for the faint and dying ! Blessed type of that precious stream which has flowed in every age, and is flowing to every nation and people under heaven ; and which never leaves the path of the Zion-traveller, till, through the midst of Jordan, he stands on the delightful shore of the Canaan that is above, where it becomes " a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, there is the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month ; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it : and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face : and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun : for the Lord God giveth them light ; and they shall reign forever and ever."*

In the recapitulation of this wonderful history in the book of Numbers, an interesting and important circumstance is recorded, which in Exodus is suppressed ; and which we must here insert, that we may view the event complete in all its parts, and that we may feel it in all its force. The miracle of extracting water from the rock, which proved so salutary to the people, became fatal to Moses himself. And this he, with his native candour and simplicity, thus relates ;

* Rev. xxii. 1, &c.

lates; “ And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice; and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”* For the illustration and improvement of which, we beg your attention to the following remarks.

Observe, first, The credit which is due to the sacred writers in general, and to Moses in particular, for their fidelity and integrity in relating those particulars of their temper and conduct which are the object of censure and condemnation, as well as those which merit applause. Indeed they do both with the same “ simplicity and godly sincerity.” They never appear solicitous to celebrate their own praise, and if glory may redound to God, and edification to men, they honestly publish their own shame. Unlike the generality of mankind, who are perpetually catching at opportunities to introduce their dear selves, that they may be valued and admired: and, with equal anxiety, drawing a veil over their errors and imperfections. But these holy men delivered not their testimony “ according to the will of man,” nor in the spirit of the world; but, “ spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” And, with candid judges, this candour of theirs will be deemed no slight argument of their veracity in general, and no slender proof of the credibility of the scripture history.

Secondly, Remark the mixture of frailty and imperfection which enters into every human character. Moses himself is not faultless. And what is more observable

* Numb. xx. 9, &c.

servable still, he fails on the side of his greatest excellency ; he is found weak there where he seemed most strong. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."* Nevertheless, what saith the history ? He loses temper, and speaks unadvisedly with his lips ; "Hear now, ye rebels ; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"† He takes glory to himself instead of ascribing it to God : "Must we fetch you water?" He presumptuously exceeds his commission. He lifts up his hand and smites the rock *twice* with his *rod*, whereas he was commanded only to *speak* unto it, before the eyes of the people.

Seems it not as if God intended to write vanity and shame on all the glory of man, "that no flesh should glory in his presence?" by shewing us faithful Abraham mistrusting his God, and seeking refuge in falsehood : the patient Job growing peevish, and "cursing his day :" the affectionate and zealous Peter basely denying his Master ; and the meek and gentle Moses waxing warm, and in his haste speaking disrespectfully of God, and unkindly of men. "Be not high minded, but fear." "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life."‡ "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips."§

Observe, thirdly, The delicacy and the danger of assuming a latitude and a liberty in sacred things. In what concerns the conduct of human life, and our intercourse one with another as the citizens of this world, many things must be left to be governed by occasion and discretion ; but, in what relates to the immediate worship of God, and where the mind of the Lord has been clearly made known, to assume and exercise a dispensing power is criminal and hazardous. The tabernacle must be constructed, to the minutest pin and loop, according to the pattern delivered

* Numb. xii. 3.

† xx. 10.

‡ Prov. iv. 23.

§ Psal. cxli. 3.

ered in the mount. If Uzzah presume to put forth his hand to support the tottering ark, it is at his peril. A holy and a jealous God will be served only by the persons and in the manner which he himself has appointed ; and the intruder into sacred offices and employments is ready to be broken in upon in hot displeasure. Has God said, “ *Speak to the rock.*” Who has the boldness to *strike* it ? Moses dares to do it ; and his rashness forfeits his title to a part and lot in the promised inheritance. Into Canaan he shall never enter, but only see it at a distance with his eyes. The offending, chiding, murmuring congregation is pitied, forgiven and relieved. The offending, hasty, presumptuous prophet is punished. “ *Our God is a consuming fire.*” “ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* Who can understand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me ; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

Remark, in the fourth place, The rashness and folly of man shall not, cannot render the purpose of God of none effect. A whole people shall not be permitted to perish for thirst because the prescribed mode of relief has not been exactly followed. Though the rock be stricken, instead of being spoken unto, it shall not fail to yield the promised fountain of water. Moses is frail, but God is good. There has prevailed, since the beginning, a strange contention between the folly and perverseness of the fallen apostate creature, and the wisdom and goodness of the gracious Creator. And, glory be to God, our evil is overcome of his good. And when all struggle and opposition are at an end, when the will of God shall finally prevail, “ and every high thought shall be brought into captivity to the will of Christ,” it shall then be found, that “ the wrath of man” has all along been “ working the righteousness of God ;” that the elementary strife

which was permitted to take place in the natural world ; the jarring, discordant passions which seemed to convulse and disturb the moral government of God, and even the infernal devices of the powers of darkness, were all, without their design, nay, contrary to their intention, carrying on the great plans of the divine providence to their consummation. Glorious, transporting thought ! I will henceforth command my troubled soul into peace. I will calmly wait the issue, and leave it to the great God, in his own time and way, to explain the reasons of his conduct, and fully vindicate his ways to men. The troubles which I see, the troubles which I feel, the troubles which I fear, though they may come nigh, shall not overwhelm my soul ; “ I shall not be afraid when I hear of evil tidings ; my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”* “ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”† “ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.”‡

Fifthly, When we behold a holy and righteous God thus severely punishing, what may be deemed, by some, a slight offence, in one of the dearest and best of his children, let none dare to trifle with his justice. If Moses, in one rash moment, by one unadvised step, incurred a displeasure which he could never remove, and forfeited an inheritance, which he never was able to recover, what hast thou, O man, to expect, whose whole life has been an accumulation of offence ; has been the addition only of sinfulness to weakness, and of presumption to folly ? “ If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear.”§ Take care how you estimate the malignity, guilt and danger of sin, by the erroneous and fluctuating standard of your own weak understanding, or still weaker passions. Not according to these, nor the maxims

* Psal. cxii. 7.

† Rom. viii. 28.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

§ 1 Peter iv. 18.

maxims of the world, nor the prejudices of a misguid-
ed spirit ; but by a steadier rule, by an unchanging
law, thou shalt be judged, and finally justified or con-
demned. If Moses lost an inheritance in an earthly
Canaan for neglecting to give glory to God in one
instance, tremble to think of being eternally excluded
from “ the inheritance of the saints in light,” for ten
thousand offences of the same nature. Beware of
reckoning any transgression small, any sin venial, any
temptation contemptible. Behold the mighty fallen,
and be humble.

It is truly affecting to find Moses in the sequel ear-
nestly entreating a remission of the sentence, but en-
treating in vain ; and, when unable by supplication
to prevail, submissively resigning himself to the will of
God. But the world has seen a still more awful
demonstration of God’s displeasure at sin. When
the Lord laid upon the head of the great atonement
“ the iniquity of us all ; it pleased the Lord to bruise
him, and put him to grief.” “ God spared not his
own Son, but gave him up for us all.” Is it possible
to conceive a motive so cogent to abstain from evil,
and even from the appearance of it ; and to loathe
and put off from us the garment spotted with the
flesh ?

But again, one offence, though it may provoke the
anger and call down the chastisement of a holy God,
breaks not off all intercourse, and forever, between
him and a good man. With the firmness of a wife
and just father, he denounces the punishment and in-
flicts it. With the tenderness and love of a gracious
and relenting parent, he carries on the correspon-
dence ; and even admits the offending child to closer
intimacy, and to familiarity more endearing. For
the great God is not like them who mar and embitter
their pardon with hard conditions, cruel upbraiding,
and mortifying recollections ; and who plainly shew,
that though they may be capable of forgiving, they
know not what it is to bury injuries in everlasting for-

getfulness. The conduct of Moses too, under the weight of this awful displeasure, is amiable and instructive. He mutters not, with fallen Cain, “ my punishment is greater than I can bear ;” he sinks not into dejection ; he replies not in resentment. While he deprecates the penalty, he attempts not to extenuate the guilt of his crime ; and though well assured he is not to have the honour of conducting Israel into Canaan, nor the happiness of enjoying a personal possession in that promised inheritance, yet he withdraws himself from no particular of duty, relaxes not his diligence, cools not in his zeal ; he labours to the last, does what he can, though he be not permitted to do what he would ; he goes before Israel to the land of promise, though access into it was denied him. This, as much as any thing in his history, marks his character and evinces the greatness of his soul. And this teaches a lesson of no mean importance in friendship among men, namely, to cultivate with diligence and assiduity the charities which we have in common, and to suffer those things to rest and sleep, which, if stirred and awakened, are likely to disturb and separate us.

It is not the design of Providence that we should think exactly the same way on all points. But, shall I agree with my brother in nothing, because we happen to differ in one thing ?

I detain you till I have made only one remark more upon the whole history. The distress of the cattle for want of water, is mentioned as a circumstance of importance both in the books of Exodus and Numbers, and it is especially attended to in the miraculous relief which Heaven provided. Is the great God degraded, when he is represented as “ caring for oxen, and feeding the ravens, and hearing the young lions when they cry ?” No, no ; these minuter views of his providential care and kindness, endear him but the more to the understanding that discerns, and the heart that feels. I know not a more tender stroke of the pathetic eloquence than that which we have in

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the prophecy of Jonah, when God extended mercy in a manner peculiar to himself, to Nineveh, that great and sinful city. “ Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night : and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than threescore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle ? ”*

One stage more will bring us with Israel to the foot of Sinai, to observe and to improve one of the most notable dispensations of Providence upon record ; “ The giving of the law.” But here let us pause, with devout acknowledgment of that bountiful hand, which fed the seed of Abraham immediately from the clouds for forty years together ; and which feeds us, through rather a longer process, by blending and compounding the qualities and influences of earth, air, fire and water. While we adore the providential care which refreshed Israel by streams from the rock, let us rejoice together, that it refreshes us by keeping our rivers ever flowing, our fountains constantly supplied, and the clouds of our atmosphere, in their season, always impregnated with the rain and the dew. “ With the bread that perisheth,” gracious God ! grant us that “ which endureth to life everlasting.” Amen.

* Jonah vi. 10, 11.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XV.

EXODUS xvii. 8—13.

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses's hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

NOTHING can be more afflicting to a humane and serious mind, than to reflect on that strife and contention which have in every age deluged the world with human blood. Who could believe, if all history did not prove it, and who can think of it without horror, that men should be continually lying in wait, like beasts of prey, to catch and devour men; that the strong, the cunning and the fierce should be forever on the watch, to take advantage of the weak, the simple and the gentle? And must it be? Father of mercies! must it needs be, that war should continue to waste the

the nations? Shall the earth be forever a field of blood? Must the peace of private families, and the repose of kingdoms, be eternally disturbed by lust and pride, avarice and ambition, envy and revenge? Blessed God! send forth the Spirit of thy Son into the hearts of men. Prince of peace! command this troubled ocean into a calm. Spirit of love! put a full end to bitterness and wrath. Subdue this carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Glorious gospel of salvation! as thou bringest good-will from God to men, restore good-will to men among themselves.

It is difficult to say whether men suffer most from their own folly, or from the cruelty and injustice of others. We generally find, that when evil from without would, for a while, permit wretched mortals to breathe and be at peace, they perversely become self-tormentors, and ingeniously contrive sources of vexation to themselves. And, which is the greater evil of the two? That, undoubtedly, of which we are the authors to ourselves. We have, then, to encounter an enemy from whom we cannot hope to escape, and whom we are unable to overcome. From a conflict with Amalek, Israel comes off with both credit and comfort; but a strife of discontent, impatience and rebellion against God, must of necessity issue in shame and loss.

God, rich in mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness, has graciously forgiven the murmuring at Horeb, and extracted water from the rock, for the relief of his people. But this woe is no sooner past than another overtakes them. "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." The transaction recorded here, so simply and uncircumstantially, is mentioned again in Deuteronomy, with many circumstances of aggravation, which greatly increase our detestation of this conduct in Amalek, and explain the deep resentment which a holy and righteous God himself expresses upon the occasion, and which by a positive

positive statute he transmits to Israel. “Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt ; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary ; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven ; thou shalt not forget it.”*

Amalek, the father of this nation, as we learn from Genesis xxxvi. 12. was grandson to Esau, and son to Eliphaz, by a concubine named Timna. The Amalekites indeed are mentioned much earlier in scripture, even in the days of Abraham, when Chederlaomer is represented, with his victorious army, as ravaging all their country. But it is well known that the sacred writers, when treating of various periods, give appellations to regions and countries which did not belong to them till ages afterwards, but by which they were better known at the time when the historian wrote. They possessed a large tract of country, extending from the confines of Idumea to the eastern shore of the Red Sea ; and from their neighbourhood to and commerce with Phœnicia, they are by some called Phœnicians.

Immediately on their passing through the Red Sea, it behoved the children of Israel to enter into this territory, on their way to Canaan. And probably the paternal relation which subsisted between them and Amalek, encouraged the posterity of Jacob to advance on their way with greater confidence. “It is the land of our brethren through which we are to pass ;” would they say, one to another. “The heart of Esau himself relented, when he saw his brother Jacob return, encumbered with a train of women and children

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* Deut. xxv. 17, 18, 19.

and cattle. He forgot his resentments ; he became the protector of the man whom he had, in the hour of passion, vowed to destroy. The injury done him in the matter of the birthright, and of the blessing, he generously forgave. Surely the posterity of Esau, after many generations, will not revive a quarrel which is extinguished and forgotten, first in the reconciliation, and then in the death of the original parties to it. After a servitude so long and so bitter in Egypt, we shall at length find a time and a place to breathe ; and the foothings of fraternal love shall console us for the rigours of oppression."

Vain expectation ! What foe so dreadful as a brother disaffected ! Egypt smote with the rod ; Amalek smites with the sword ; he basely, cruelly seizes the moment of Israel's languor, weakness and dejection, and attempts to crush those whom a sanguinary tyrant had persecuted, and whom Heaven itself had bruised. The cowardice of this behaviour is equal to the unkindness of it. Had they boldly appeared at the first, to dispute the passage of the Red Sea, and to repel by force of arms the invasion of their country, their conduct, though ungenerous and unkind, had been ingenuous and manly. But, either through fear or policy, they permit Israel to advance, they watch the moment of their difficulty and distress, and, like dastards, steal upon the rear of an army whose front they dared not to oppose.

Neither good qualities nor bad are found single in the human breast. And, in the nation whose character is now the object of our censure, we find a combination of the worst qualities of which our nature is capable, all originating in the deficiency of one great principle, which is at the root of all the evil which men commit, " he feared not God." Why did Amalek rake up the ashes of an ancient grudge ? " He feared not God." Why did he join to afflict the miserable, and to overwhelm the oppressed ? " He feared not God." Why did he meanly attack the weaker and

and more vulnerable part of his adversary, in the hope of safety and impunity? “He feared not God.” Wherefore, in general, are men subtle, revengeful, cunning and selfish? They “fear not God;” they “harden themselves against him,” and yet think “to prosper.” They “love not their brother whom they have seen,” because they are wilfully ignorant of, or hate God, “whom they have not seen.”

Such is the union which Providence has established between all the parts of the natural and of the political body, that the weakness or distress of one member is the infirmity and suffering of the whole. The hindmost and the feeble of Israel are smitten; the foremost and the strong feel and immediately resent it. “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand.” We have here a combination which ought never to be separated, and in which safety and success are ever to be found, namely, the acknowledgment of Heaven, and the use of appointed means, the sword in the hand of Joshua, the rod in that of Moses, the embattled host below in the valley, the intercessor with God “wrestling,” and “making supplication” upon the hill. In vain had Moses prayed if Joshua had not fought. Destitute of “the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man,” the skill and courage of the warrior had failed before the enemy. The rod of God! in how many different services is it employed! how many various purposes does it answer! It smites the river of Egypt, and it becomes blood. It smites the rock in Horeb, and it sends forth a stream of water. It is extended towards heaven, on the top of the hill, and Amalek is destroyed. Striking and instructive type of that “rod of God’s mouth” wherewith “he flays the wicked:” of that sword of the Spirit, “which is the word of God: of that hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces:” of that gospel, which is “a sav-

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our of God in them that believe, and in them that perish."

Observe how God appoints to every man his station of usefulness and importance. It was not for want either of zeal or courage, that Moses takes his post at a distance on the hill. It is not for want of piety, that Joshua leads on the armies of Israel on the plain. The mistakes and miscarriages of the world arise from the weakness and wickedness of men; at one time over-rating their talents, and thrusting themselves forward into situations for which they are wholly unfit; and at another, through timidity shrinking from the duties of that station which Providence has assigned them; and at a third, treacherously, through some bias of private interest, passion or party, selling the trust committed to them, to the foe. Happily, in the case before us, the head which directed, and the hand which executed, were in perfect unison. The spirit that fought, and the spirit that prayed, were one.

Let us first ascend the hill with Moses and his two friends, and adopt the feelings of men, who at once felt for the public cause, were not without well founded apprehensions from the common enemy, and at the same time feared and trusted the Lord. Moses has given his orders to Joshua, and he has so far done well; but to stop there had been doing nothing. He has set the means to work, and now he can confidently look up to Heaven for that blessing which can give success to the means. He ascends to meet God, but ascends not alone. As wickedness seeks to fortify and to keep itself in countenance by the society of the wicked, so the fire of devotion keeps itself alive by the sacred communication of a kindled flame. The hands of Moses alone had soon become feeble, and must have dropped down, and Amalek finally have prevailed; supported by Aaron and Hur, they continue "steady till the going down of the sun;" and Amalek and his people are discomfited with the edge of the sword.

Of Aaron, one of the companions of Moses upon the mount, we know much ; of Hur, the other, the scripture account is more sparing. Those who are never at a loss so long as fancy and invention can create, make him the son of Caleb, and the husband of Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. It appears from the history, that he was the father of Uri ; and the grandfather of Bezaleel, the famous artist, employed, by special endowment and appointment of Heaven, for the construction of the more curious and costly furniture of the tabernacle and sanctuary. But it is of more importance for us to know him, and for him to be reported, as a person of the first quality, and his quality supported by that which gives rank its highest lustre, genuine piety. Moses left him, in commission with Aaron, to judge the people, when a short while after this he went up alone into Mount Sinai to meet God. This is argument sufficient of his high rank ; and the assumption of him to assist his devotion in Mount Horeb, while Israel was engaged with Amalek, is a proof equally clear and decisive of his extraordinary piety.

Behold then the man of God, supported and encouraged by two such companions, discovering all the honest anxiety of the patriot, together with all the confidence and fervour of the saint ; with his eyes eagerly bent on the conflicting armies in the plain below ; and his hands, with his heart, lifted up to God in the heavens, from whom his help came. It was clearly the intention of Providence, that the deliverance which should be wrought for Israel on this occasion, though not wholly independent on the use of means, should evidently appear to flow chiefly and only from the interposition and grace of Heaven. "It came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed ; and when he let down his hand, that Amalek prevailed."

This is the first battle which Israel was called to fight ; and it was designed to be a model of all that should

should follow ; of assured success to them, and victory over all their enemies, provided they constantly acknowledged God, with hands continually lifted up to heaven. And it had undoubtedly a farther view, namely, to represent in general, the powerful and certain effect of prayer to God, and of a sense of dependence upon him ; to shew that our strength is in exact proportion to the perception of our own weakness, and to our confidence in almighty grace. The lesson inculcated in this history is the same which Christ taught his disciples in the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow, “That men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”* If importunity and the love of ease have power to constrain a man to do his duty, though he have no inclination to it, how much more certain the effect of earnestness and importunity with the Hearer of prayer, the Father of mercies ; who is ever more ready to grant than man to ask ? “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.”†

Have you considered then, my christian friend, what a powerful instrument is put into your hand, mighty as the rod of God in the hand of Moses, wherewith he did wonders ? “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain ; and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”‡ Surely then “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”§ God has not given you assurance of success in all your undertakings, but he has bestowed upon you the privilege, and promised you the spirit of prayer, by which you shall certainly obtain one of two things ; either that blessing from above upon your honest endeavours, which

* Luke xviii. 1.

† Matt. vii. 11.

‡ James v. 17, 18.

§ James v. 16.

which maketh rich, which insures success, and makes it durable ; or, that resignation of spirit, and submission to the will of God, which subdue misfortune, and which turn calamity and disappointment themselves into advantage. God has not given thee, my friend, the promise of riches ; but he has given thee, what is much better, the spirit of grace and supplication to form thy soul to contentment. You have no security against pain and sorrow ; but you have that which produces patience and fortitude. You cannot promise yourself long life ; but habitual intercourse with God by prayer overcomes the fear of death.

Glorious privilege ! Whatever my situation in life be, here is something to improve it, if good ; something to mend it, if evil. Here is the ornament and essence of prosperity, the cure and cordial of adversity. Here is the guardian and the guide of life ; the sweetener and subduer of death. Prayer brings all the glorious perfections of Deity into our possession. “ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him.”* “ When I am weak, then am I strong ;” “ for I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Is the thorn not removed, the messenger of Satan not rebuked, though the Lord be thrice besought that they may depart ? No matter. Is it not said, “ My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness ? Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,”†

But where are the hands which never hang down ? Those of Moses himself became heavy. “ The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Fatal omen to Israel ! Aniak instantly gains the ascendant. But happily, Moses was not alone in the mount : “ And they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon ; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the

* James i. 5.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

the one on the one side, and the other on the other side ; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend ;" and so devotion kindles and keeps alive devotion. Secret prayer, like the melody of one sweet-toned voice stealing upon the ear, gently wafts the soul to heaven : social worship, as a full chorus of harmonized sounds, pierces the sky, and raises a great multitude of kindred spirits to the bright regions of everlasting love, and places them together before the throne of God. How happy are Aaron and Hur, in lending this aid to the wearied hands of Moses, and to the declining interest of the Israel of God ! How happy is Moses in being thus supported ! But there is an Intercessor whose hands never hang down, whose fervour never cools, whose mediation never fails, whose attention is never relaxed. " We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." Him " the Father heareth always :" " as a Prince he hath power and prevaleth."

Let us now turn our eyes to the struggle in the valley below. There we meet " the confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood :" the alternate shouts of acclamation and triumph, mingling with the piercing shrieks of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. Israel, now hurrying on to victory, and anon flying before the insulting foe. The event for a while is awfully in doubt ; turning upon the strength and feebleness, not of thousands, but of one single arm ; decided at length, not by the edge of the sword, but the elevation or depression of a rod ; and that rod swayed, not by the skill and prowess of Joshua, but the firmness and devotion of Moses.

But now, doubt and anxiety are at an end. The hands of Moses are propped up, and Israel finally prevails. And what heart save that of an Amalekite but must rejoice in the issue ? " The cunning is taken in his own craftiness." A design of violence and blood falls

upon

upon the head of him that contrived it. The righteous and innocent cause bears down pride and cruelty. We behold the destination of Heaven standing good, the birthright sold away, the blessing anticipated ; the elder made subject to the younger. “ God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength : who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered ? ”*

Israel has conquered. But it is impossible to mistake the means by which he has gotten the victory. “ The hand of the Lord, and his holy arm, they have gotten him the victory.” The altar therefore, which was built to celebrate this signal success, shall by its name perpetuate the remembrance of God the deliverer. Jehovah-Nissi, “ the Lord my banner,” was inscribed upon it by the divine appointment ; and a reason is assigned in the sixteenth verse. “ For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

These words, having been variously rendered, have given occasion to various opinions among interpreters. Some read the passage thus, “ Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” This reading resolves the guilt of Amalek, not into an insidious and cruel design against Israel, but into a rash and impious attempt to defeat the plan of Providence, which was to bring Israel into the quiet possession of Canaan, and to exalt that nation favoured of God but envied of man, to wealth, power and empire. God therefore was pleased to vindicate in person the cause which was his own, and to write disappointment and a curse upon every plan which Amalek could form, of greatness and prosperity. So “ fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God,” so dangerous to form a combination “ against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords

from

* Job ix. 4.

from us. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."*

Others literally translate the words thus, "With the hand upon the throne of the Lord, *he* hath sworn that he will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." *He*, that is, Moses, hath sworn, with the most awful solemnities, and recorded the oath in a book for perpetual preservation, that there shall be no peace between Israel and Amalek till he be utterly destroyed. The hand which was extended towards heaven, the throne of the great and terrible God, with the rod in it; the instrument of a victory which was interrupted by the going down of the sun, has been lifted up, to "swear by Him that liveth forever," that the triumph of that day shall be followed up, till the hated name of Amalek be extinguished from under heaven.

Some make Jehovah himself to be the person who binds himself by this solemn oath. "The hand," that is, Jehovah's own hand, upon the throne of the Lord. "Because he could swear by no greater, he hath sworn by himself, that *He* will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." We have a prophecy in the mouth of Balaam to the same effect; "And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever."†

The execution of this dreadful sentence was reserved to the days of Samuel, four hundred and twelve years after; and was committed to Saul, who, through an impolitic and sinful lenity, failed to fulfil the design of Providence, and thereby incurred the displeasure of Heaven, and forfeited his life and crown by his disobedience. I transcribe the passage.

"Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I

* Psal. ii, 2, 3, 4.

† Num. xxiv. 20.

remember that which Amalek did to Israel ; how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not ; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”* This order Saul obeyed but in part. He assumed and exercised a dispensing power, and it became a snare to him. He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive ; and reserved the best of the spoil. The prophet is sent of God to reprove his disobedience ; which Saul attempting to palliate, brings down this censure upon his head. “ When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel ? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice ; and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”† Has God commanded to destroy ? Who shall presume to save ? Has he commanded to spare ? Who dares destroy ? “ I say unto you, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear : fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell : yea, I say unto you, fear him.”‡

* 1 Sam. xv. 1, 2, 3.

† 1 Sam. xv. 17, &c.

‡ Luke xii. 4, 5.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XVI.

EXODUS xviii. 7—12.

And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him: and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travel that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel: whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them. And Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses's father-in-law before God.

THE great Author and Ruler of the world has evidently in view the pleasure and happiness, as well as the wisdom and virtue of his rational creatures. We find, through the widely expanded frame of nature, and the extensive plan of Providence, as many sources of joy as there are means of improvement. What an infinite,

infinite, beautiful and pleasing variety in the works and in the ways of God ! all ministering to human comfort, all aiming at making men good. The mind of man is formed to desire and to relish variety. The objects with which he is conversant are therefore varied without end, to gratify that desire, and to correspond with that relish. The glare of perpetual sunshine and the fervid heat of an eternal summer, would speedily oppress and destroy mankind : but, relieved by the tranquillity of darkness, the freshness of spring, the sedateness of autumn, and even the gloom of winter, they become no less grateful than they are beneficial. In surveying the globe, the eye is not permitted to tire by having to crawl along a boundless plain ; but sparkles with delight as it springs from valley to valley, and from hill to hill. And even the glories of the starry heavens are rendered still more glorious by being kept in continual motion ; and thereby are made continually to exhibit a different appearance.

The events of human life, for the same reason, are endlessly variegated like the objects of sense. Wretched were the dull stagnation of constant prosperity, success and ease. Intolerable would be the agitation and distress of unceasing, unabating, unrelenting toil, pain, disappointment and vexation of spirit. But, one thing being set over against another, the great, the prosperous and the happy are forever admonished, reproved and brought low ; the poor, the despised and the miserable are cheered, supported and exalted.

The word of God exhibits a resemblance to the system of nature, and to the conduct of Providence. In it we have the same pleasing, engaging variety ; the same happy accommodation to the tastes, occasions and necessities of mankind. The antiquarian and the naturalist, the politician and the legislator, the poet and the philosopher, the moralist and the divine, the man of retirement and the man of the world, the man of reason and the man of fancy, all find in scripture

ture an helper toward the discovery of truth, and the attainment of happiness ; a guide to the understanding, a corrector and supporter of the imagination, a comforter of the heart, a teacher of wisdom, a rule of faith, a source of joy.

The very structure of the sacred compositions is imitatively calculated, by a beautiful and easy transition from subject to subject, and from scene to scene, to relieve and yet to preserve the attention ; presenting always a new and interesting object, or the same object placed in a new and interesting light. Thus the tumultuous, noisy and bloody scenes of Horeb and Rephidim—scenes of murmuring, rebellion and war, are happily relieved by scenes of domestic tranquillity, love and joy ; and we are prepared to attend Moses, to meet God in the mount, by mixing in the virtuous, cheerful and affectionate intercourse of his private family.

Let us then thankfully take the relief which a gracious God has in his word provided for us ; and contemplate one of those calm, but neither uninteresting nor uninstructive representations of human life, which come home to the bosom and the fire-side of every man who has a heart, who has a relation, who has a friend.

The history of Moses now looks back, and reminds us of his being “a stranger in a strange land ;” namely, of his fleeing from Egypt into Midian, of his arriving there, conducted of Providence, just at the moment to render a seasonable service to the daughters of Raguel, or Jethro, the priest of Midian ; of the hospitable reception afforded him by that worthy man, and of the alliance which he formed with him, by marrying his daughter Zipporah. Upon his being called back to Egypt to undertake the weighty charge which God had assigned him, he had intended and attempted to carry his wife and children along with him. But being reproved of God by the way for neglecting in his own family the rite of circumcision, the seal of God’s covenant, and, either specially

ly admonished from Heaven, or following the dictates of human prudence, he sends them all back to his father-in-law, as likely to prove either a burden, or a hindrance to himself, in the discharge of his great trust. For true piety, while it reposes entire confidence in God, will never presumptuously load Providence with what is the proper work and business of man. Diligence and foresight, as well as faith and hope, are its genuine offspring. But the tempest being now blown over, and Moses, of a messenger and a suppliant unto Pharaoh, being now become the head and leader of a great nation, it was natural for him and for his family mutually to desire to be restored to each other. Jethro, therefore, having received information where Israel was, and what the Lord had done for them, takes his daughter and grand-children, and carries them with him to the camp of Israel.

The innocent endearments of natural affection, and the honest communications of private friendship, are graciously intended to alleviate the cares of public life, and to strengthen the mind by diverting it from incessant and intense application to serious business. No man can always be a general, a statesman or a king. And happy it is for those who occupy these exalted but troublesome stations, that they are frequently permitted to sink the public in the private character, and to drop the hero, the senator, the judge, the sovereign, in the man.

Distance has not alienated affection between the man of God and his family. A slighter affection is effaced and destroyed by absence; a stronger love is confirmed and inflamed by it. Good old Jethro satisfies not himself with sending by the mouth of another a compliment of congratulation to his son-in-law; neither will he permit Zipporah and her sons to go unaccompanied, unprotected, through the wilderness; but, aged and infirm as he was, chooses himself to be their companion and their protector.

Moses

Moses seems to take delight in delivering to us this passage of his life. He is amiably minute and circumstantial in the detail of it. He dwells upon the tender and affecting recollections of sorrows and of joys that are past. His heart is in it. He stops in his narration to tell us the names of his two sons, and his reason for giving them those names. “The name of the one was Gershom : for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land : and the name of the other was Eliezer ; for the God of my fathers, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” Is this beneath the dignity of history, of sacred history ? No, it is the most honourable province of history, to exhibit the honest, unsophisticated feelings of nature, the genuine workings of the human heart, the real, though humbler scenes of human life. What signifies to us the meeting of two old men three thousand three hundred years ago ? Much every way. One of them is a Moses, and that Moses is describing his own sentiments, unveiling his own heart. He can serve as an instructor and an example to none, in respect of the prophetic dignity, as the bearer of the potent rod, as the man whose face shone, by forty days intimate communion with God. He can instruct but a few, by his wisdom and sagacity as a prince and a law-giver. But as a son, a husband and a father, he is a pattern to myriads, and shall continue to teach to the end of the world.

How pleasant it is to find this great man the same in retirement and privacy that he is upon the great theatre ; and delineating a battle, a triumph, and a family-meeting, with the same simplicity and godly sincerity ! Public men have too often two different characters. Plausible and specious, humble, modest and insinuating before the world, they are self-willed and tyrannical, confident, assuming and brutal in private ; they often fawn where they fear, and domineer where they have power. Not so the meek and gentle prophet and judge of Israel. He waits not in state till

till his relations are admitted to pay their homage, He reckons it nothing derogatory to his high dignity to go forth to pay the respect due to age; and to humble the son, however high in place, at the feet of the parent. “ And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.” Were it after the separation of but a day, friends have a thousand questions to ask, a thousand little incidents to relate; about their health, their entertainment, their dangers, their deliverances; about the observations which they have made, the projects they may have formed. What must it then have been for two such friends, for such a father and son, after a separation of many months, during which, events of such high moment to both had taken place, to meet together again in health and comfort, to communicate mutually the full soul, to retire into the tent, to shut out the world, and give vent to the overflowings of tenderness and affection!

And with what a subject of conversation are they furnished; “ And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians, for Israel’s sake, and all the travel that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them.” The most trifling incidents which befal a brother, a friend, a child, are interesting and important. What must then have been the emotions of jethro to hear the wonders of Egypt; to learn the great things of God, astonishing in themselves, and acquiring an additional weight, creating a new interest, from the person who related them, and who was himself so deeply concerned in the event?

But the good man is elevated, as he wondering listens to the wonderful tale, above all personal and selfish regards, above the partiality of private friendship, above the tenderness of natural affection. His heart dilates at the thought of a whole nation delivered, of a tyrant trampled in the dust, of the power, wisdom

wisdom and mercy of God magnified. “ And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel ; whom he had delivered out of the hands of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods ; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them.”

This friendly interview issues in a solemn religious service, in which Aaron and all the elders of Israel are called to assist. What a blessed influence has true religion, in conciliating kindness and confirming friendship ! When men cordially agree in the same glorious object of worship, the little peculiarities of form will not obstruct the mutual attraction of brotherly love. Prejudice will droop and die, and charity will draw a veil over its neighbour’s singularities and imperfections. Happy the family whose union is cemented by piety ; the family whose happiness and peace are built upon the love of God ; whose employments, communications and pursuits are improved and sanctified by prayer !

Due attention having been paid to the calls of hospitality, the dictates of private friendship, and the demands of filial duty, Moses reverts next day betimes to the discharge of the duties of his public station. The time, the talents of the minister of God, are not his own, they belong to mankind. Superficial observers who consider but the eminence of the place which a magistrate fills, the robe which he wears, the respect with which he is attended, look up to him with envy, and call him blessed. They think not of the thousand sacrifices which he is constrained to make of his ease, of his inclination, of his health, of his natural propensities, of his private attachments. They talk of the honours and emoluments of his office, but they overlook his anxious days, his painful toils, his sleepless nights, the causeless hatred which

which he incurs, the unprovoked insults which he must bear, and must not resent, the surrender which he must make of solid and substantial felicity, and the exchange of real and certain tranquillity, for uncertain usefulness or precarious reputation. Who would not be Moses, to sit on high and judge the people? But who would be Moses to have the people stand by him for judgment, "from the morning to the evening!"

The obscure part of mankind are little sensible what they owe to Providence for their obscurity. They can go out and come in unnoticed. They can go to rest when they will, and continue it as long as they please. They have no vigilant, jealous, envious eye over them. They are free from the dreadful conflict of inclination and duty, of interest and conscience, of reverence for God and respect for man. They can enjoy their families and friends. What they have, however little, they can call their own. What, compared to these, and such advantages as these, is the ermine cloak, the ivory sceptre, the gem-encircled crown? Rejoice, O man, that the world knows thee not, cares not for thee, condescends not to trouble thy repose. Creep thy way silently, I beseech thee, to heaven; unafraid of being overlooked, neglected and forgotten in the multitude of the redeemed, who there live, and reign, and "rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Observe how even a Moses may err in an excess of zeal, through ignorance, inexperience or inattention. Desirous of doing good by administering justice impartially, he cares not what trouble and labour it may cost himself. The service of fear or of necessity is slow, reluctant, partial and imperfect; the labour of love is cheerful, active and persevering. Moses is in the way of his duty early and late. If the public be served faithfully, if equity be dispensed, if God be glorified, he is willing to spend and to be spent in such a cause. "And Moses said unto his father-in-law,

law, because “the people come unto me to inquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.”*

We have seen Jethro, in the character of a pious man, an affectionate neighbour, and a kind relation. We see him now blending with these excellent qualities the character of an able statesman and sagacious politician. There is no man so wise as not to need instruction, and none so simple as to be incapable of sometimes giving advice. Jethro plainly perceived, that the course of life which his son-in-law was pursuing must soon prove fatal to him. That, by attempting what was beyond his strength to bear or perform, he was in the way of quickly rendering himself unable to do any thing at all. He therefore proposes a subdivision of the toil, by the appointment of proper men to the office of judge, who might try and determine the causes of less importance, and apply to Moses, and to God through him, only in matters of high moment, and as the last resort. Thus Moses would be greatly relieved, many good men would be trained up to the useful, honourable and important employment of judging between his brethren, and the people meanwhile sustain no damage.

The qualities which he points out as requisite to constitute this character, shew how carefully he had considered the subject, and how well fitted he was to advise in a matter of this kind. Let those who have the appointment of judges study well what he says, and act accordingly. “Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness: and place *such* over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.”†

The first requisite in a judge, according to Jethro, is *ability*. He must be a man of sense, penetration and discernment. Because, with the best intentions,

a stupid,

* Ver. 15, 16.

† Ver. 21.

a stupid, weak or dissipated man, will be apt to err in judgment; either because he is unable to comprehend the cause, or will not employ the necessary time and pains to understand it.

But what are the greatest and most shining abilities, destitute of a principle of conscience? They are but a mischievous weapon in the hands of a bad man. A judge, therefore, ought to be a man that *fears God*. A man, not only restrained by respect to the world, or actuated by regard to reputation: these are found feeble and ineffectual in the hour of temptation; these are fluctuating and unsteady, as the opinions, passions and interests of men; but the fear of the Lord is a perpetual unchanging motive and restraint, the same in darkness as in the light, the same in secret as before the eyes of the whole world.

This principle is closely connected with, and indeed it naturally produces a third quality, of primary importance in this character. A judge must be a *man of truth*. A sacred observer of truth in what he says himself; a diligent promoter of truth, and an impartial avenger of falsehood and injustice in others. Even a regard to some of the principles of religion, unconnected with the love of truth and justice, which are of the number of those principles, might be apt to mislead a man. Compassion, for example, might dispose a judge to favour the poor man, though he has the worst cause. The all-wise God, therefore, thought it necessary to throw in a special caution to this purpose, lest a principle, amiable and excellent in itself, should be perverted into a source of injustice, and has enjoined, by a positive statute,* that the cause, not the person or condition of the man, should be considered by him who sits in judgment.

Jethro finally lays it down as essential to the character of a judge, that he be a man who *hates covetousness*. In which there is a strong insinuation, that where the love

* "Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause."—Exod. xxiii. 3.

love of money predominates, the exercise of all other necessary and suitable qualities are likely to be obstructed or perverted ; ability under such influence rendered only more dangerous and hurtful ; the fear of God lulled asleep ; the heart hardened ; the conscience, by the strong opiate of gold, reduced to a state of insensibility, and truth and justice hoodwinked on the tribunal.

The history of our own country affords a melancholy example of the truth of this observation, in the conduct of that “greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind,” Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, and Lord High Chancellor of England, in the reign of James I. who with a soul that comprehended, filled, extended and enlarged the circle of science ; a genius that penetrated through the whole vast system of nature, an imagination that transcended the flaming boundaries of the world, and a heart devoted to the love of God and mankind—basely received the wages of unrighteousness, accepted a bribe to pervert justice, was accused and convicted of corruption in the execution of his high and important trust, acknowledged his own shame, and was deservedly driven, with disgrace to himself, and with the indignation, shame and pity of a mortified and astonished world, from an honourable station which he filled so unworthily.

But alas, after all, when we read of the appointment of judges and of generals and of their requisite qualities, of what does it remind us but that men are selfish, covetous, litigious and violent : tenacious of their own, and ready to encroach upon others ? Wherefore is law ? Wherefore are there tribunals ? They are for “the lawless and disobedient.” Make men just, gentle, kindly affectioned ; make them christians indeed, and then war is at an end ; the courts are shut up ; then there would be no need of a judge, because there would be no offender.

The advice which was wisely and kindly given, is graciously and candidly received. A proud and self-sufficient

sufficient spirit would have rejected the counsel, however salutary, because tendered by a stranger. But true wisdom only considers whether the hint be useful, practicable and necessary, without regarding from what quarter it comes. And such was the wisdom of Moses, and he was prepared for converse with God, who had learned deference and respect for the opinions of men. And thus the very first rudiments of the Jewish constitution, were suggested by the observation and experience of a stranger and a Midianite. And the great Jehovah disdained not to permit his prophet to be taught, and his people to be governed, by the wisdom and intelligence of a good man, though he was not of the commonwealth of Israel. If men were capable of learning to be wise and good, He who is wisdom and goodness itself would vouchsafe to teach them, not by precept only, but by example also. As Jethro suggested, so it was done. Moses was eased of a burthen intolerable, the course of justice was not stopped, God was glorified, and the world edified.

You must have observed, that I have once and again held out to your expectation a subject of discourse, from which I have once and a second time shrunk back. It is still before me, and I feel myself as reluctant as ever to proceed. Who is not ready to sink under the awful terrors of the dispensation of the law from Sinai? "Who is sufficient for such things?" But I must venture to go on, and endeavour to carry you with me to the foot of that tremendous mountain. And I flatter myself you have not been altogether disappointed or injured in being stopped a little in your progress. With recruited strength and spirits, we shall attempt to advance on our way. But we shall first from this eminence survey the ground over which we have travelled. Eminence, did I say? No. Let us join the innocent, cheerful society in the tent of Moses, and learn to cultivate the endearing charities of private life; and, having considered it well, let us retire making such reflections as these—

That

That it is not fortitude, but folly, unnecessarily to expose ourselves, or those whom we love, to hardships and danger. “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* It is our care, not our labour and reflection, which we are encouraged to cast upon God.

That it argues a deficiency in some moral principle or another, when persons whom nature, and the obligations of society have united, discover an inclination to live asunder. Wisdom or necessity may impose a temporary separation: but well-disposed minds ever look to, and eagerly lay hold of the means and the season of restoration and union.

That regard to public utility, exalts and improves private friendship.

That to promote the glory of God, his own virtue, and the good of his fellow creatures, is the great and constant aim of every good man.

That as none is too wise to learn, it is a proof of affection to communicate useful hints; and a high proof of wisdom to take and use them, from whatever quarter they come. There is one Being only who is not to be instructed. “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out; for who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?”†

And finally that, though we cannot successfully imitate eminent men in every particular of conduct, or in the display of talents which may be denied to ourselves, we are not thereby precluded from the exercise of the inferior talents which we possess, and from a virtuous emulation where it is possible for us to succeed. Let me strive to be a Moses in some things, though I be conscious I must fall inconceivably behind him in most. Amen.

* 1 Tim. v. 8.

† Rom. xi. 32, 34.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XVII.

EXODUS xix. 16—22.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud ; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled: And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire : and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount : and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

IN man, as he came perfect from the hands of his Creator, the immortal principle, the “ breath of life,” “ the living soul” exercised its just dominion over the earthly and sensual part of his nature. In man, degraded by sin, we behold the grosser domineering over the purer, the heavenly subjected to the terrestrial,

al, the soul a slave to the senses. When our nature through grace shall be restored, the soul shall resume its empire; the body itself shall become spiritual, shall shake off the power of gravitation, and “ascend to meet the Lord in the air,” being “fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.”

The dispensations of Heaven are suited to the condition of man. “God knows our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.” He makes sense his road to the mind; he seizes the conscience, and melts the heart, by speaking to the eyes and the ears. And when we consider how easily, and through how many different channels he can force his way to the inmost recesses of the man, who but must shudder at the thought of meeting the Father of spirits, ourselves disembodied spirits; at the thought of dropping the clay tabernacle in its native dust, and of becoming all eye to see God as he is, all ear to hear his voice, all soul to perceive and comprehend him! If God, encouraging and amiable in purifying and directing fire, in the cloudy pillar, and in harmless, unconsuming fire in the bush at Horeb, be awful; if dreadful at Sinai, coming in flashing, dazzling, threatening fire to promulgate his law; what must he be “coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?” If the sound of that trumpet, which proclaimed the approach of God to Israel, was ready to kill the living with fear, what must be the trumpet which shall awake the dead? Whatever majesty and solemnity may appear in the giving of the law, every one shall in a little while behold it infinitely exceeded in the consummation of the gospel.

God has hitherto declared his divine perfections by the effects which they produced. The plagues of Egypt awfully manifested his power and justice. The daily showers of manna, and water following them from the rock, bespeak his power and goodness. But he now opens his mouth, to proclaim in the ears of

men, his name, his nature and his will. Let us, with Israel, at a trembling distance contemplate this great sight, and listen with reverence to the Almighty uttering his voice.

The posterity of Abraham, according to the promise is now become a great nation. But what are multitudes without government, and what government is a blessing without law? Happiness consists not in having such and such possessions, but in being fitted to enjoy what we have. The constitution of other states is the work of time, is the result of experience, arrives at maturity by degrees. Laws and restrictions, encouragements and restraints are suggested by events. But when the great Jehovah condescends to become a legislator, the utmost extent of possibility lying open to his view, provision is made from the beginning for every case that can happen. The rule of his government is laid down at once; and the civil and religious constitution of that nation over which he chose to preside, is established by a wisdom which cannot err.

It was not unpleasant, as we were contemplating the scene exhibited in the preceding chapter, to listen to a wise and good man giving advice with respect to the administration of public justice. But we now tread upon holy ground; and we listen, not to a man like ourselves, but to the only wise God. The whole taken together unfolds an unparalleled display of mercy and majesty, of goodness and grandeur.

Forty-seven days have now elapsed, since that "night much to be remembered," when the destroying angel walked through the midst of Egypt, and slew all the first born. And how many singular and interesting events have taken place in that short period? The Red Sea has been divided; the bitter waters of Marah sweetened; bread from heaven rained down; a living stream extracted from the flinty rock in Horeb; Amalek discomfited! Whether of the two shall we most admire, the greatness of the works which God performs, or the facility with which he brings them

them to pass? What a high value are we taught to put upon time, when we see to what valuable purposes, through the blessing and assistance of Heaven, a little time may be made subservient.

Three days more are employed in making solemn preparation for this celestial visitation; so that the law was delivered exactly on the fiftieth day after the celebration of the feast of passover: and in commemoration of it, the Jewish feast of Pentecost was ever after observed and rendered illustrious in the annals of the christian church, by a new dispensation, not of terror, but of grace; the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles of our Lord, in the miraculous gift of tongues. Even the minute circumstances of times and places, may have a significance and an importance of which we have at present no apprehension. And I am fully persuaded, when God shall be pleased to vouchsafe us clearer light, and fresh discoveries of his will, numberless instances of coincidence and resemblance between the legal and evangelical dispensations shall rush upon us, of which we can now form no conception. Why God has appointed the seventh day to be the weekly sabbath; why the law was proclaimed from Mount Sinai just after seven times seven days had elapsed from the going out of Egypt; why, in the possession of Canaan, the land was to be permitted to rest every seventh year; why the general release, or year of jubilee, was to be stately observed, after a constant revolution of seven times seven years; and why the Holy Ghost was given “when the day of Pentecost was fully come,” or after seven times seven days from the day that “Christ our passover was sacrificed for us?” These are questions which we pretend not to resolve. But certain it is these things have a meaning: “I know it not now, but I shall know it hereafter.”

Sinai, the scene of this splendid exhibition, is the highest eminence of a vast ridge of mountains, which run from east to west through Arabia Petræa, as you

go from the north-east coast of the Red Sea to Palestine. The adjoining eminence is called Horeb, and is rendered illustrious by the miracle of the water issuing from the rock. And from their propinquity, and their forming part of the same chain of mountains, they are often put the one for the other ; and the adjacent desert country is called, indifferently, the wilderness of Horeb, or the wilderness of Sinai.

Moses was first called up into the mount alone, and thence sent back to the people with repeated messages full of tenderness and love. Preparation was made for the tremendous appearance of the glory of the Lord, by the most gracious and reiterated assurances of favour and protection. This is the endearing language which the great God condescends to employ on the occasion ; “ Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” The beautiful image of the eagle, and her young ones, is happy beyond expression, and evidently proceeds from Him from whose view no part of the world of nature lies concealed. The natural history of that king of the feathered race, were this the time and the place to introduce it, would be the best commentary on the passage. But we may at least stop to illustrate, by comparing it with the same image, delineated by the same masterly hand, with still greater strength of colouring, and greater force and variety of expression. “ For the Lord’s portion is his people ; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness ; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad

abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings ; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields ; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.”* The sagacity and vigilance of the eagle in providing the means of support and safety for her callow brood, her strength and fierceness in defending them, her tender sympathy with their weakness, her anxiety to hasten on their maturity and capacity to provide for themselves, the pains which she takes to instruct them to fly,—as they are all fully justified by facts, so they are conveyed to us in language the most simple, plain and elegant ; and raise us to the contemplation of an object, of all others the sublimest, sweetest, most interesting and most composing to the soul. They represent to us, the all comprehending view of eternal Providence, the never-sleeping eye of the Watchman of Israel, the unaffailble protection of the heavenly Guardian, the more than maternal care, diligence and zeal which Jehovah continually exercises over them that are his. Happy is that people that is in such a case : yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”†

As the friendship between God and Abraham, the father and founder of that great nation, commenced and was confirmed in the solemn ratification of a covenant, performed according to rites of God’s own appointing ; so the political existence and importance of that nation were directed to take their rise in the *cutting* or *dividing* a covenant, with similar solemnities. And this was the tenor, these were the conditions of it. On the part of Israel, in one word, obedience to the voice of God ; submission in all things to the will of their best friend, and kindest benefactor, who could have nothing in view but their happiness. On the part of God, the promise of a profusion of blessings

* Deut. xxxii. 9, &c.

† Ps. l. cxliv. 15.

sings temporal, spiritual and everlasting ; a rank among the nations, which should render them the envy and wonder of the world ; an establishment, which length of time should not impair ; a succession of prophets, of priests and of princes, which was to issue in the eternal priesthood and unlimited sovereignty of one, whose government was to be an universal and everlasting blessing to them and to mankind. “ Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people : for all the earth is mine.” *Segulah*, “a peculiar treasure,” something exceedingly prized and sedulously preserved, a gem of peculiar lustre and value, which an affluent and powerful prince culls out from among many, takes under his own particular charge, and will not entrust to the care of another.

Moses takes up this striking idea again in that beautiful song of praise, in which, at the close of life, he recapitulates the wonderful ways of Providence to that chosen family : “ The Lord’s portion is his people ; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”* The promise which follows in the sixth verse, is wonderfully calculated to inspire ideas of dignity and importance ; “ Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” They had just left a country where the priesthood was held in high estimation ; where the persons of those who bore that sacred character were inviolable, and their property exempted from the imposts which were laid upon that of other subjects. But the peculiar respect paid to this order of men, and the immunities which they enjoyed, served only to expose more glaringly the contrast, the degradation and distress of the great body of the people. Whereas here was a whole nation destined of Heaven to equal honours ; not a king and subjects, but a commonwealth of kings ; not one ministering at the altar in the name of thousands, one admitted within the veil, and myriads removed to an humbling, mortifying distance ; but a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, majesty and sanctity in one. These

* Deut. xxxii. 9.

These are the words which Moses is commanded to rehearse in the ears of all the people. Having descended from the mount, he collects them accordingly by their *elders*; the men first in age, first in wisdom, first in dignity and authority; and delivers to them the high message which he had in charge. Impress ed at once with the power and grace of their heavenly King, they as one man reply, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Which answer Moses again reports to his dread Employer. Thus, in the very preparatives for the publication of the law, the mediation of the gospel was clearly taught and inculcated; and thus throughout we perceive that guilty creatures can have no safe nor comfortable access to a holy God, but by means of "a days-man to lay his hands upon both;" and thus, the very minister of a fiery law exhibited a type of that great High-Priest, at once "merciful and faithful;" "faithful in the things pertaining to God;" "merciful, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Moses is upon this informed, that God intended on the third day from that time to manifest himself to all the people as the Leader and Ruler of that vast army, and as the Employer and Patron of Moses his prophet, in a manner that should leave no room to doubt in whose name he spake, and by what authority he acted: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord." "I come to thee in a thick cloud." God already resided among Israel, and presided over them in a pillar of fire and a cloud. But whatever be the medium of communication between the Deity and his creatures, it is capable of being increased and improved beyond imagination. There is a darkness grosser, and a cloud thicker and more awfully impregnated, than any of which we have had experience. There is a voice louder, and a glory brighter than any which we have heard

heard or seen. Who can declare, who can conceive the utmost extent of the power of the Almighty? There is a splendour infinitely superior to that of "the sun shining in his strength." There may be an angel excelling in might: "Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God." Know we ever so much, there is a field of discovery before us infinite as the immensity of JEHOVAH, to employ a duration of inquiry endless as his eternity.

A command is now issued to the people to employ themselves that day and the next in solemn preparation for this august visit. They are directed, as an external mark of respect to the most holy God, as a token of obedience, and as an indication of inward purity, to wash their clothes, to abstain from whatever might defile the body or the mind, and even to deny themselves such innocent and lawful gratifications as might have a tendency to distract their attention and distract their thoughts. When God came to give the law, he came after solemn warning, he gave evident signs of his approach, he declared to a moment when he was to be heard and seen in his majesty. But, when he shall come to execute the law, we are informed that he shall take the world by surprise, that men may be always ready. "Behold I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."* "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."† "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."‡

When but a friend or neighbour is expected to visit us, decency requires that our persons, our houses, or entertainment, be rendered as inoffensive and as acceptable as we can make them. The anxiety which men feel, and the pains which they take to receive and entertain their superiors, is too well known to need any remark. It is only when the King of kings, and the Lord of lords announces his approach, that men are

* Rev. iii. 3.

† Matt. xxiv. 42.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 44.

are incurious, unceremonious, careless and indifferent.

The great Jehovah was to manifest himself first to the eye. “ Be ready against the third day ; for the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, upon mount Sinai.” All is hitherto attractive and encouraging. The face of God is clothed with smiles. He comes “ to dwell with men upon earth.” But the grace and condescension of God, while they invite to the communications of friendship, forbid the boldness and freedom of familiarity. While he makes himself known as a Father, a Protector, a Guide, he permits us not to forget that he is at the same time “ a great God, and a great King.” Therefore a strict injunction is given in the twelfth and thirteenth verses, “ And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it : whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through ; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live : when the trumpet soundeth long, ye shall come up to the mount.” This last expression, “ When the trumpet soundeth long, ye shall come up to the mount,” is evidently a caution and a threatening, not an invitation ; and seems to import, “ Let him who dares presume to approach nearer ; let him come up into the mount, if he will.” At the sound of that tremendous trumpet, they were ready to sink into the earth with terror instead of desiring or attempting a nearer intercourse with the great and terrible God, who hath put all nature into consternation.

As they were commanded, so they did. All impurity is carefully removed ; and they see, in solemn silence and earnest expectation, in hope mingled with fear, the gradual approach of this all-important, this eventful day.

At

At length, in all its pomp and importance, the third day arrives. Every creature, every element feels and gives witness to the appearance of its God. Heaven and earth, angels and men, the water and the land, air and fire, announce the presence of their great Creator and Ruler. I tremble as I read. What must it have been to see and hear? "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." Lo, the hoarse thunder is lost in the louder sound of the trumpet; and that awful sound, in its turn sinks into silence, before the all-penetrating, all-commanding accents of the voice of God himself. The thick darkness of a cloud, impregnated with the terrors of divine justice, threatens one moment to extinguish forever hope and joy; and that darkness the next moment is dispelled by the more terrible flashes of celestial fire. How poor the state of an earthly prince compared to this! "God maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire." What heart is not melted in the midst of this wild uproar? There is not an object of astonishment which we are acquainted with, but what enters into this description. Thunder, lightning, blackness of darkness, tempest, earthquake, the trumpet of God; and all these are but the coverings of terror, the harbingers of majesty and might. Behold, God is in the thunder, in the lightning, in the tempest, in the earthquake! they are mere instruments to do his pleasure.

But we are directed to one object perfectly placid and composed in the midst of tumult and confusion: "even when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed exceeding loud," Moses possessed his soul in patience. "Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." It is guilt that gives force to fire, that lends fury to the stormy wind, that shakes the earth by first shaking the soul. Faith in God controls the elements,

elements, and soothes the soul to rest in communion with God, as the child falls asleep in the fond maternal bosom.

Moses comes up at the command of Him who is King and Lord of nature, and therefore he has nothing to fear. The three children fall down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, but the flames have no power to kindle upon them ; they consume only the cords with which they are bound ; they themselves walk at liberty through the midst of the fire ; they rest as on a bed of roses, for behold another is in company with them, and “the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Daniel sleeps secure in the den among lions, more composedly than Darius in his palace, surrounded by his officers and guards ; he sleeps calmly, as a father in the midst of his children. He who fears God has nothing else to fear.

But what new doctrine is to be ushered in under all this formidable apparatus ? What law, unknown, unheard of before, is to be introduced and enforced by ceremonies so dreadfully august and solemn ? Just that which was from the beginning, that which the finger of God more silently and curiously interwove with the very texture and frame of the human soul. The voice of God says, from the heights of Sinai, none other things than those which conscience speaks to every man, from the deep recesses of his own breast. It is this that gives weight to both the law and the gospel. They have their counterpart in the nature and condition of man. They are of God, who knows what is in man and what is good for man.

But can He whose “presence fills heaven and earth,” change his place ? Can God be said to ascend, or descend ? The devout eye sees him in every creature, in every place, in every event. The pious soul feels and acknowledges him incessantly. But to rouse stupidity, to reprove carelessness, to convince infidelity, God must assume state, clothe himself with thunder, involve

involve the top of Sinai in clouds, and shake its foundation. As in the composure of Moses we behold the confidence of divine friendship, and the security arising from union with God, so in the caution which is given in the twenty-first verse, “ Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish,” we see the danger of unlicensed curiosity, of presumptuous boldness. Fire and darkness equally repel and intimidate, equally compose and encourage. All the dealings of God with man, are “ line upon line, and precept upon precept.”

The similitude of the legal and evangelical dispensations, and their difference, would necessarily occupy a much larger portion of your time and attention than now remains. It were better, therefore, to bring them together in one discourse calculated for the purpose.

I conclude the present Lecture with simply reading two or three short passages of scripture, closely connected with and serving to illustrate our subject ; written at two very different periods, and in two very different states of the church. The first is in the history of Elijah, the great restorer of the law, near six hundred years afterward. “ And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave and lodged there. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him ; and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah ? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts : for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword ; and I, even I only am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not

not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave: and behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."* The second is the winding up of that wonderful comparison and contrast of the law and the gospel, which constitute the great body of the epistle to the Hebrews, and which the apostle sums up in these remarkable words, sixty-four years after the advent of Jesus Christ. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet; and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. For they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape

* 1 Kings, xix. 8, &c.

escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”*

* Heb. xii. 18, &c.

History of Moses.

LECTURE XVIII.

JOSHUA i. 17.

According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee : only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

JOHN i. 17.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

IN forming estimates of greatness, it is natural for men to consult their senses, not their reason. With the idea of royal majesty we connect those of a chair of state, a numerous and splendid retinue, an ermine robe, a sceptre and a crown. But wisdom and goodness are the qualities which confer real dignity, and command just homage and respect. Our preconceptions of earthly magnificence much exceed the truth, and knowledge speedily levels the fabric which imagination had raised. But the wonders of nature, the mighty works of God, grow upon us as we contemplate them. No intimacy of acquaintance reduces their magnitude or tarnishes their lustre. And if the very frame of nature, the vastness, the variety, the harmony and the splendour of the visible creation be calculated to fill us with astonishment and delight, how must the plan of Providence, the work of redemption, the great mystery of godliness, excel in glory !

In

In the discoveries which it has pleased God, at sundry times and in divers manners to make of himself to mankind, he has at one time addressed himself directly to the understanding; at another, made his way to the heart and conscience through the channel of sense. The law was given in every circumstance of external pomp; it was accompanied with every thing that could dazzle the eye, fill the ear, and rouse the imagination. The kingdom of God, in the gospel of his "Son, came not with observation." The great Author of the dispensation of grace, according as it was predicted concerning him, "did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." He had, in the eyes of an undiscerning world, "no form nor comeliness, no beauty why he should be desired." And therefore "he was despised and rejected of men." But we are taught to think very differently of his second appearance. "He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory :" "In his Father's glory, and all his holy angels :" "With the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God."

The manner of delivering the law corresponded with its nature. It was clothed with thunder. It was surrounded with the blackness of darkness. It emitted flaming fire. It denounced death. The spirit of the gospel, in like manner, breathed in the mode of its publication. The doctrine of peace and reconciliation was delivered to men, in the tenderest accents of human friendship. And temporal mercies and deliverances prepared the way for "spiritual and heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus."

We are now to bring these two dispensations together, and to compare the one with the other, in order that we may discover and admire that uniformity of design which they jointly aim at promoting, the mutual lustre which they shed upon, and the mutual aid which they lend to, each other.

By

By "the law" we understand the whole of that scheme of the divine providence which related to the posterity of Abraham ; the promises which were made to them, the ordinances prescribed, the character which they bear, the events which befel them, from the day in which that patriarch left his kindred and country, till the day when the whole was swallowed up and lost in the person, doctrines, ordinances, life, sufferings and death of Him, who was held up from the beginning as the great, leading, commanding object in the eternal eye ; the accomplishment of the promises, the substance of the types and shadows, the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Moses and Christ frequently speak of their mutual relation and resemblance. "I will raise them up," says God by Moses, "a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."* "Search the scriptures," says Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me ; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"†

The persons, characters and offices of the two legislators, therefore, naturally fall to be first considered, in tracing the resemblance of the two covenants which were established with mankind through their mediation.

Of the birth of Môses, and salvation to Israel by him, there seems to have been a general expectation in his own nation, and an apprehension of such an event as general in the minds of the Egyptians. Hence the bloody decree of Pharaoh to destroy from

the womb all the male children of the Hebrews ; and hence, on the other hand, that eagerness to save a child, who, from the moment of its birth, exhibited unequivocal signs of his future greatness and usefulness. When Christ came into the world, multitudes were looking for the Consolation of Israel." The prophecies concerning, the promises of the Messiah, were evidently hastening to fulfil themselves. The Jews expected their king : Herod dreaded a rival. The person of the promised Saviour was pointed out by signs in heaven and signs on earth, which it was impossible to misunderstand. An extraordinary star describes an unknown path through the air to the place of his birth. A multitude of the heavenly host proclaim the joyful event to the shepherds. It was revealed unto Simeon by the Holy Ghost, " that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."* Conducted of the Spirit he came into the temple at the moment when Christ was presented there, according to the law. He recognizes the promised of the Lord, and closes his eyes in peace. Anna the prophetess, instructed by the same Spirit, gives a similar testimony, and speaks of " the holy child to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."†

The circumstances of extreme danger which attended the birth of Moses and of Christ, and the wonderful means of their preservation and deliverance, constitute a striking mark of resemblance between them. Behold the long-looked-for deliverer of the Jewish church and nation, ready to perish by the hand of Pharaoh : and the great King and Head of the christian world threatened by the murdering dagger of the tetrarch of Galilee ; while the earth was watered with the blood of their infant brethren. Moses is saved from destruction by the daughter of the tyrant who sought his life ; he finds an asylum and a school in the house which he was destined to plague and to humble.

* Luke ii. 26.

† Luke ii. 38.

humble. And Jesus of Nazareth finds shelter in Egypt from the fury and jealousy of Herod.

The personal beauty and accomplishments of the Israelitish law-giver were probably intended to typify, in an inferior degree, the personal glory and excellency of Him, concerning whom the prophet thus writes, “Thou art fairer than the children of men ; grace is poured into thy lips : therefore God hath blessed thee forever.”*

The wretched state of Israel when Moses was born, and of the world when Christ came to save it, are a melancholy and affecting counterpart to each other. The former subjected to the arbitrary authority of a sanguinary tyrant ; the latter, in dreadful captivity to the prince of the power of the air, that “murderer from the beginning ;” “that spirit which ruleth in the children of disobedience.”

Their mental qualities present a lovely and an instructive similitude. “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”† “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”‡ Compassion for his afflicted brethren, early discovered the temper, and marked the character of Moses, the man of God. Sympathy with the miserable, and that sympathy effecting seasonable relief for them, marked the paths of the Son of God through a world of wretchedness. “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue now with me three days, and have nothing to eat : and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way.”§ “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.”|| Over the grave of Lazarus “Jesus wept.” “When he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known,

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even

* Psalm xlv. 2.

† Numb. xii. 3.

‡ Matt. xi. 29.

§ xv. 32.

|| ix. 36.

even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”*

The offices which Moses and Christ were called of Providence to execute, present us with points of likeness which it is impossible not to see, and equally impossible to mistake. “ And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to all his land: and in all that mighty hand, and in all that great terror, which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.”† No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”‡ Moses was king in Jeshurun, and conducted the thousands of Israel through many difficulties and dangers to their destined habitation: Jesus, God’s “ anointed King over his holy hill of Zion,” brings his “ many” spiritual “ sons unto glory.”

To constitute one deliverer for Israel, Moses and Aaron must unite their talents, must combine their force, must conjoin their offices: the prophet must co-operate with the priest; two distinct persons carry on one design; but, in the Saviour of the world, all talents, all virtues, all offices meet and centre: the prophetic inspiration of Moses, Aaron’s pleasantness and grace of speech; the regal dignity of the one, the faceidotal purity of the other. In order to put Israel in possession of the promised land, Joshua must succeed to Moses, and happily finish what his master has so successfully begun. But the great Captain of salvation needs no coadjutor, can have no successor: “ He gives grace and glory;” He leads his redeemed through the wilderness, introduces them into Canaan, maintains them in quiet and everlasting possession.

Other lines of resemblance will appear as we prosecute the history, and shall not therefore be anticipat-
ed.

* Luke xix. 41, 42. † Deut. xxxiv. 10, &c. ‡ John i. 18.

ed. But we must not dismiss the subject without pointing out wherein the likeness fails, and how much the type falls short of the object which it represents.

The wonders performed by Moses in Egypt were wrought by a power delegated to, and conferred upon him for the purpose. The miracles of Christ were produced by a power original and inherent. Moses, though the meekest of all men, was betrayed into rashness, lost temper, and “spake unadvisedly with his lips.” But in Jesus behold a spirit which was never ruffled, a tongue in which guile was never found; lips that never offended; a mind which no insult could disturb, no unkindness provoke; nor even the horrid pangs of an unmerited death rouse to resentment. “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.”*

Moses died and was buried; Jesus died and was buried, and rose again.” Moses received the law; Christ gave it. Moses and Elias attend the Saviour on mount Tabor, as his ministering servants; Jesus receives their attendance and homage, as their Lord.

Having spoken of the resemblance between the authors of the two dispensations, we proceed, as was proposed, to speak in the same view of the two dispensations themselves.

And first, They rest on one and the same authority, are dictated by the same unerring wisdom, and are directed

* Heb. iii. 1, &c.

rected to the same great and glorious end. Indeed, one of the great proofs that both are of God is the conformity of both to the nature and condition of man. The precepts of the law are not novel constitutions, which had no existence till the days of Moses ; neither are the consolations of the gospel new discoveries of grace, unheard of till the four thousandth year of the world. Sinai thundered and lightened in Adam's conscience the moment he tasted the forbidden tree, and drove him to seek refuge "from the presence of the Lord God amidst the trees of the garden." The terrors of the law raged in Cain's guilty breast, long before there was any record written on brass or stone. And the promises of pardon and salvation are coeval with the conviction of the first offender, and the denunciation of his punishment. The tongue which pronounced on man the doom of death, proclaims the glad tidings of life and recovery.

I know that the *law* is of God, for I have that within me which acknowledges and approves its rectitude and excellency ; and even when it condemns me, I am constrained to call it "holy, just and good." I know that the *gospel* is of God, for I feel that within me which welcomes its approach, discerns its suitableness, rejoices in its fulness, rests upon its truth. It is of God, for it descends to the level of my guilt and misery, corresponds with my hopes, suits my necessities.

Our blessed Lord took an early opportunity of explaining himself on this subject. An absurd idea prevailed, that the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a total subversion of the Mosaic dispensation. An absurdity into which some christians have inadvertently given, for want of making a plain and necessary distinction, between those particulars of the law which are in their own nature eternal and unchangeable, like the nature of that God who is its author ; and those, which being typical and prophetical, ceased of course when the predicted event arrived, and the type, having fulfilled

fulfilled its design, was lost in the thing typified ; and those, which being temporary and transitory, ceased with the occasion of them. Of the first sort are the precepts of the decalogue, or the ten commandments ; which under every constitution that affects such a being as man, must be immutable and everlasting. Of them it is that Christ said, “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets : I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* Of the second class are the laws of the daily sacrifice, the great annual feasts, the levitical priesthood, and the like. They pointed out Christ the Lord, they led to him, they were lost in him. And in the third rank we place the law of circumcision, the political economy of the Jewish nation, all that related to the possession of Canaan, and which ceased of course with the dissolution of their government, and the loss of their national importance. These observations being attended to and kept in mind, will prevent the confusion arising from the ambiguous acceptation of the word “ law,” as expressing the Old Testament dispensation.

The law, then, and the gospel, the two tables of stone delivered to Moses, and the “ grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ,” coincide, secondly, in this, that they both point out with equal clearness and force the necessity of a Saviour. Every word pronounced by the voice of God from Sinai, is in truth a sentence of condemnation. While it enjoins future obedience, it fixes past guilt. While it says, “ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath,” it accuses of idolatry. While it recommends the observance of the sabbath, it charges

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* Matt. v. 17, 18.

home the violation of it ; and so of the rest of the precepts of the decalogue.

The law, therefore, carried the gospel in its bosom, as the new-changed moon exhibits a great body of obscurity, embraced by a small semicircle of light ; but which is to be irradiated by degrees, till the whole becomes one great globe of light and glory ; and Moses performs the part of “ a school-master to bring us to Christ.”

To hear of a constitution by which I might have lived, after my life is forfeited, is only to embitter my misery. It is like hearing of a cordial after a man has swallowed poison. Now, it could never be the design of the gracious Law-giver to insult human misery, by holding out a system which could avail the guilty nothing. While, then, the divine justice lays down the law in all its strictness, purity and extent, saying, “ I am the Lord who will by no means clear the guilty ;” “ Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them ;”* the goodness which condescends to give a law at all, the wisdom which explains it, the patience that forbears to punish its transgression, all plainly and distinctly proclaim the necessity and the existence of an atonement, and lead to “ the bringing in of a better hope.”

Thirdly, The spirit of both dispensations is a spirit of love. God enforces upon Israel obedience to the law from Sinai, by the consideration of his being the Lord, which “ brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage :” “ who has borne them on eagle’s wings, and brought them to himself.” And “ love” on the part of man “ is the fulfilling of the law.” Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love

* Gal. iii. 10.

love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* The gospel, in like manner, has its source in love, the love of God ; and its great aim and end is to produce love to God. “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”† “ And we love him because he first loved us.” “ The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”‡ And, “ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”§ “ He that says he loves God, and hateth his brother, is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?”|| And, when both shall have produced their full effect, “ perfect love shall cast out fear,” the voice of God shall be unaccompanied with thunder and lightning, cloud and tempest. The storm is in the mind of the guilty creature. The wrath of fire is not in God, but in fallen man ; in “ the carnal mind, which is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”¶ When that is extinguished, all is at peace. The aim and labour of the gospel is not to reconcile God to man ; but to reconcile men to God : for “ God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”**

Fourthly, Both the legal and evangelical dispensations equally discover to us our distance from God. The one, by enumerating and declaring our offences ; the other, by enumerating and declaring the tender mercies

* Matt. xxii. &c.

† John iii. 16.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

§ John xiii. 35.

|| 1 John iv. 20.

¶ Rom. viii. 35.

** 2 John iv. 16.

mercies of our God. The law treats us as alienated friends, whom it is needful to convince, to reprove and humble. The gospel considers us as friends restored, no “longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God :” “once darkness, but now light in the Lord : once afar off, but made nigh by the blood of Christ.” The law shews us how far we have deviated from the path of duty and happiness ; the gospel conducts us back through our wanderings, unravels the intricacies and errors of our dark steps, and replaces us in our father’s house. Moses informs us that we are wrong, “like sheep going astray ;” Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and takes us under the care of “the Shepherd and bishop of souls.” Moses points out the dreadful depth into which we have fallen, the dreadful distance from heaven to hell ; Christ reveals the glorious height to which we are raised, the glorious distance from hell to heaven. Moses tells me what I ought to be and to do ; Christ makes me such as he would have me to be. “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ ; (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

But the law was delivered to the world in a very different manner from the publication of the gospel ; in

* Eph. ii. 1, &c.

in fire that burned, in tempest that roared, in a cloud that darkened, in words that threatened. It awed men into distance ; it inspired terror. But the gospel comes in light that consumes not, in glory that dazzles not, in language that threatens not. The law says, “ Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it : whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through ; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live ; when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.”* The gospel says, “ Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”† “ He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”‡ But to the impenitent and unbelieving, the gospel speaks the same terror which the law did from Sinai ; nay, it wears a still more frowning aspect. “ Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”§ “ How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”|| He that despised Moses’s law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, where-with he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace.”¶ And on the other hand, to them that believe, the law speaks in the mildest,

* Exod. xix. 12, &c.

† Matt. xi. 28.

‡ John vi. 37.

§ Rom. ii. 8, 9.

|| Heb. ii. 3.

¶ x. 28, 29.

mildest, gentlest language of the gospel ; for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”† “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”‡ I know not whether the whole bible contains an expression of goodness more singular and striking than these words which issued from the mountain that burned with fire. Our fears are alarmed at the mention of the great and dreadful name—“The Lord God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.” But justice has its limits. It may be stretched out to the third or fourth generation of offenders. Yet the “Lord will not strive continually, neither will he keep his anger forever.” But grace knows no bounds. When mercy is to be extended, it looks forward and forward, from a third and a fourth, to thousands of generations of them that love God. In what promise of the New Testament is the love of God preached more sweetly than in this precept of the Old ?

Both dispensations then have their mildness, and both their terror. Their mildness from the grace of the Creator ; their terror from the guilt of the creature. And if the proclamation of the law were thus dreadful ; if the alarm of judgment to come shake the foundation of the everlasting hills ; if Sinai tremble, and the rocks melt before the Lord, coming as a Protector and a Friend, what must the feslions be, the great day of doom, the awful hour of execution when the Judge shall come “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the

* Rom. viii. 1.

† Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. ‡ xx. 6.

the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* “When the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”† “Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”‡

“Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat to offer. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry: by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”§ And all “this is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious

* 2 Thef. i. 8.

† 2 Pet. iii. 12.

‡ Psal. l. 22.

§ Heb. viii. 1, &c.

ous had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”*

We are assembled this night, my brethren, the subjects of the law; the students of the gospel; the expectants of Christ’s second appearance. “ See then that ye resist not him that speaketh from heaven.” Ye are happily set free from the law of ceremonies; happily subjected to the law of morality; and “ not without law unto Christ.” “ Stand fast therefore in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.” Enjoy and improve what you have; affect not more than a wise Providence permits. Look forward to that day when you shall join an innumerable company of angels, yourselves like the angels of God in heaven; when you shall associate with the spirits of just men made perfect, yourselves perfect as they are; when you shall add your voices to the celestial choir, in singing “ the song of Moses and the Lamb;” when you shall see the face of God without dying, and hear his voice without quaking for fear. “ Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

* 2 Cor. iii. 6, &c.



